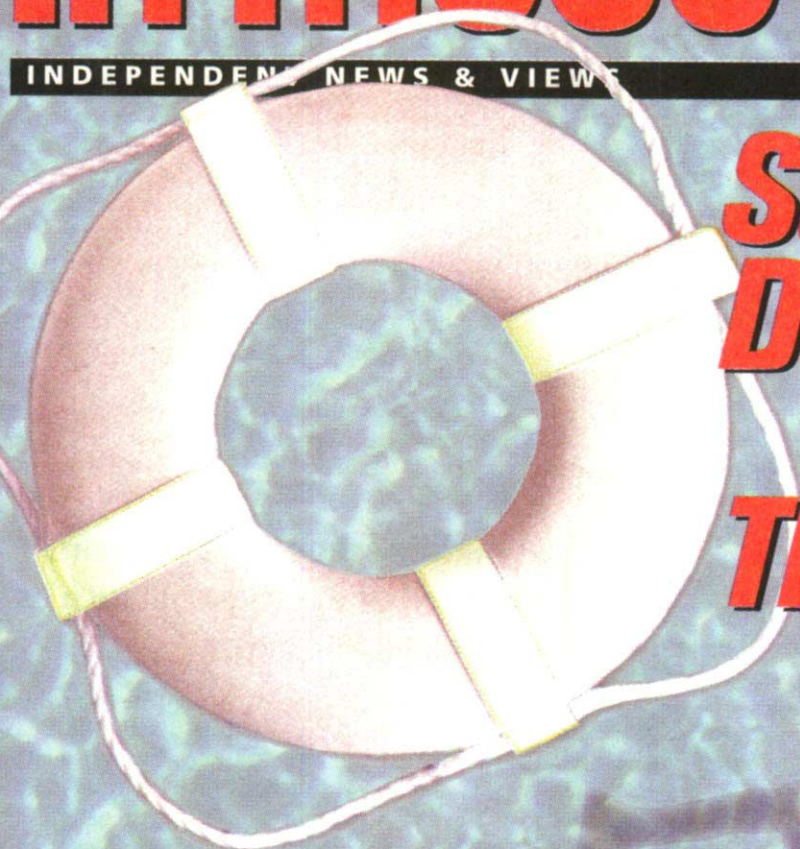


ODOM VS. SADDAM • UNIONS AGAINST THE WAR • RETURN TO SOLARIS

In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

January 6, 2003



Saving the Democrats from Themselves

Can progressives win the battle for the party's future?

John Nichols reports

**Paul Wellstone:
A Winning
Progressive
Politics**

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Editorial

No Child Left Unrecruited

In another sign of the U.S. military's increasing encroachment into civilian life, all high schools are now obligated to provide the Pentagon with the names, addresses and phone numbers of their juniors and seniors. Any school that refuses to comply with these provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act and this year's National Defense Authorization Act stands to lose all federal funding.

The U.S. military is a growing force in public education. In middle schools, students are being targeted with programs such as the Young Marines and the Navy's Starbase-Atlantis. In high schools, the Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) is spreading across the country. Currently about 500,000 students in more than 3,000 high schools participate in the program, with JROTC units authorized in another 500 schools.

What's more, school districts around the nation are augmenting their education systems with publicly funded military academies. About 2,000 eighth-graders applied for the 140 spots in the Chicago Military Academy, a JROTC school that serves the African-American community in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood on the South Side.

The Pentagon designs the JROTC curriculum and allows no input from the host school districts. JROTC classes are taught by former military officers, none of whom are required to have education degrees or other credentials.

This absence of standards extends to the program's educational materials. Did you ever wonder what happened to the Indians? An Army JROTC textbook reveals: "At the close of the Civil War, after the large Union forces were disbanded, a small regular Army was given the task of pacifying the Indians. ... Fortunately for the Army, the government policy of pushing the Indians farther west then wiping them out was carried out successfully."

A Navy JROTC text explains, "Not all nations are blessed with great resources. We need the resources other countries can provide to maintain our standard of living."

And another Army JROTC textbook informs students, "Under democracy there must always be economic class divisions, yet the free market system offers an incentive for people to change their economic status. Everyone, no matter what their political associations, can succeed in moving up in the class structure."

Lessons in upward mobility seem to be a central part of JROTC programs, which are

most often established in poor school districts that serve African-American or Latino students. In essence, JROTC serves as a form of economic conscription, a way to maintain an "all-volunteer" military.

In a letter notifying school administrators of their new military responsibilities, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Secretary of Education Rod Paige write: "The All-Volunteer Force has come to represent American resolve to defend freedom and protect liberty around the world. Sustaining that heritage requires the active support of public institutions in presenting military opportunities to our young people for their consideration. ... For some of our students, this may be the best opportunity they have to get a college education."

Not to mention the best opportunity the military has to swell its ranks. About 45 percent of students in JROTC enlist in the armed forces. Who can blame them? Military

In middle school, students are targeted with programs such as the Young Marines.

service is one of the few privileges that their government offers them. An Army JROTC textbook explains: "Citizens owe allegiance to their government, which in turn grants them rights and privileges of citizenship."

This perversely authoritarian view of the relationship between the individual and the state is made to order for a militarized society.

We prefer the Declaration of Independence's vision of governments as human-made institutions that derive "their just powers from the consent of the governed."

—Joel Bleifuss

Just as democratic government depends on the consent of the governed, publishing *In These Times* depends on the consent of you, the reader—in the form of contributions above and beyond the price of your subscription. In January, *In These Times* will celebrate its 26th anniversary. We have just sent out a letter to the 1,258 *In These Times* contributors who have not yet replied to an earlier anniversary appeal. That letter contains detailed information on why your financial help is urgently needed. Please read it and respond. Without your support, *In These Times* will not be here next year.

In These Times

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January 6, 2003

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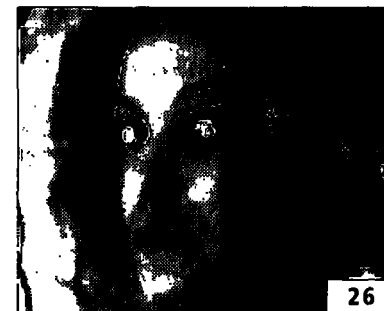
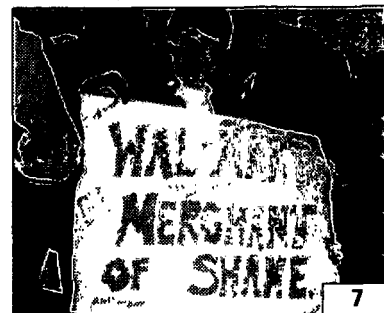
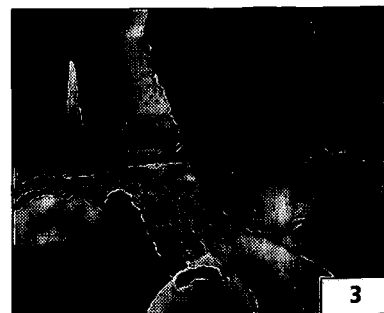
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Failing the Crew

Once again, *In These Times* dedicates an issue to film ("The Big Picture," November 25) without a single mention of the critical working-class issues that now envelop the global film industry.

Are you aware that film and TV labor pools have been disrupted and national cinemas destroyed in key film-producing countries by the media corporations' search for subsidies? Or that Canadian film subsidiaries have decimated the American film industry, shrinking the amount of American film jobs?

The cinema is a product, just like cars and running shoes, and it's the working class that creates it. Please don't leave us in the shadows.

**Michael Everett
Hollywood**

Ending Impunity

As Sara Berndt indicates ("Justice in Guatemala," November 25), the outlook for human rights in that country remains bleak despite the recent conviction of a former Guatemalan military official for the murder of anthropologist Myrna Mack.

If our government would release more of the classified documents requested years ago by the Guatemalan government—as was done in the case of El Salvador—it would help greatly to end the impunity of such atrocities. Congress could also pass the Human Rights Information Act, which was introduced several years ago.

**Anne M. Rice
Great Falls, Virginia**

Shop Smart

Yikes! Susan Douglas wants us all to become Grinch-like and avoid buying presents for Christmas ("Turning Nothing into Something," November 25). Can I suggest some amendments to that thought? I am a full-time potter and have for many years earned my grocery money through selling "stupid Christmas presents." Rather than bankrupting a lot of good craftsmen by not shopping, shop for handmade products or services instead. Drive past a Wal-Mart and go to a craft fair, bakery or independent bookstore.

**Gary E. Rith
Hillsboro, New Hampshire**

Trigger Happy

I take offense to Rick Mercier's closing statement ("Under the Gun," November 25). I am a well-educated, 30-something, six-figure

earner, with a wife and two children. I am also a member of the NRA and own four firearms. I believe it is my citizen's responsibility to be prepared to resist tyranny in whatever form and to be capable of defending my family if it becomes necessary.

Am I, or anyone who holds a contrary opinion, a paranoid fanatic? Are the politicians who listen to us concerned citizens pandering to us? Or are politicians who suggest ineffective new laws to provide a false sense of security to a nervous public pandering to it?

**Lee McFarlain
Houston**

Rick Mercier was right that the sniper shooting occurred in Virginia, but everything else was chock-full of lies. The fact is that California has not adopted ballistic fingerprinting because it is unreliable and costly. Moreover, most firearms experts do not agree that ballistic fingerprinting is a good idea, and he quotes a *New York Times* article misstating the facts. Only New York and Maryland have such laws, and Maryland's law completely failed to catch the snipers.

**Rudolph DiGiacinto
Alexandria, Virginia**

No Anti-Semite

For the past couple of months, Joel Bleifuss has provided a succinct critique of the Bush administration's warmongering. This is a

necessary service and is alone worth the price of the subscription.

Imagine my surprise then to read Barry Joseph's criticism of Bleifuss' October 14 editorial ("Letters," November 25). "It is too easy to blame the Jewish state for all our problems," Joseph writes, adding that it is anti-Semitic to "pretend that Israel is the driving force behind an irrational U.S. war against Saddam Hussein."

I re-read the editorial and discovered that war hawks Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle are also perceived as "Israel-firsters," that some Israel supporters believe a war with Iraq would allow the United States to reshape the Middle East to be more favorable to Israel, and that AIPAC supporters helped finance the election defeats of Reps. Cynthia McKinney and Earl Hilliard.

These are reasonable and defensible assertions. Someone needs to step forward and say put the sticks and stones away. Bleifuss is no more guilty of anti-Semitism than George Bush is guilty of compassionate conservatism.

**Jeff Epton
Chicago**

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Please keep your letter short and include your address and daytime phone number.

Terry LaBan



Spare a Cup

Coffee growers struggle to survive a global slump

By Megan Rowling

Last summer, after a worldwide plunge in coffee prices, thousands of unemployed coffee plantation workers in Nicaragua were forced to live in roadside camps. Conditions in the camps were appalling: Whole families were living in tents without adequate food supplies or sanitation facilities, and 45 percent of the children under five there suffered from chronic malnutrition, according to UNICEF and the Nicaraguan Health Ministry.

Low coffee prices and falling production have left more than 250,000 jobless in Nicaragua, says Fatima Ismael Espinoza, an agronomist with the coffee cooperative SOPPEXCCA. "People have died because of the slump in prices."

Eventually, in mid-September, the government proposed measures to provide food, health care, work and even land, together with short-term financing and debt restructuring, for the coffee growers. In response, workers stopped blockading roads and marching to Managua, the capital, to protest the urgency of their situation.

Yet the cause of their plight—rock-bottom coffee prices on international markets—remains unsolved. Some 25 million coffee growers from Central and South America to Africa and Asia are now struggling to survive "the worst crisis coffee-producing countries have faced," according to the International Coffee Organization (ICO). "They are facing a very difficult situation, with potential consequences of social and political disruption," ICO Executive Director Néstor Osorio warned in October.

Coffee has lost half its selling price during the past few years, leading to a huge drop in export earnings for coffee-producing countries, where many farmers are no longer able to cover their cost of production. And there is little hope for a recovery in coming months, mainly due to an excess of global coffee stocks.

Aided by the launch of a major campaign by Oxfam in September, the rest of the world has begun to take notice. In



Hunger in Nicaragua's northern coffee-growing regions has left 4,000 children at risk of death from malnutrition and related diseases, according to human rights organizations.

mid-November, the U.S. House and Senate both passed unanimous resolutions urging private-sector buyers and roasters, such as Sara Lee, Kraft, Procter & Gamble and Nestlé, to cooperate in working out sustainable solutions.

The resolutions also called on President Bush to support "multilateral efforts to respond to the global coffee crisis"—a veiled call for the United States to rejoin the ICO. It left the organization in 1993 after the breakdown of an international quota system that had controlled coffee prices for almost three decades. The Cold War had provided an incentive for the United States to maintain the prices of commodities that provided livelihoods for farmers in developing countries. But when it ended, the government's focus shifted to free trade, which conflicted with membership in initiatives like the ICO.

The ICO has formally invited the U.S. government to rejoin, and is now awaiting a response. "We don't think there should be too much opposition," says Pablo

Dubois, head of operations at the ICO. "In the past, we had the quota system, but that no longer exists, removing some of the objections." Indeed, both the National Coffee Association and the Specialty Coffee Association of America, the bodies representing the U.S. coffee industry, have publicly advocated a return to the ICO.

But not everyone is convinced the administration will be keen to go back to a multilateral system. "Recent political pressure has increased the chances," says Jon Jacoby of Oxfam America. "But the indication is that [the Bush administration is] not ready to sit down at the table with others."

Major roasting companies are also coming under pressure to participate in finding solutions to the crisis. Argues Phil Bloomer, director of the Oxfam campaign, "The coffee giants have presided over a vast expanse of human misery at the bottom of the supply chain, but have done almost nothing to prevent or solve it."

The ICO wants the roasters to play a more active role in promoting coffee con-

sumption. Oxfam goes further, calling on companies to use only coffee that meets basic ICO quality standards and to pay farmers "a decent price" (one that is above the cost of production). It also wants them to help fund the destruction of excess stocks and programs that help farmers diversify away from coffee, as well as increase the amount of coffee they buy under fair trade conditions.

Not surprisingly, roasters are reluctant to commit to such measures. But there are signs consumer pressure could change this. At a recent public debate in London, Hilary Parsons, head of corporate affairs for Nestlé United Kingdom, admitted that purchasing direct from farmers, which Nestlé has done on a limited basis, "is not the same as fair trade." Roasters, she added, "will have to listen to the voices of consumers."

In the United States, Jacoby reports that Procter & Gamble has shifted its stance in response to a flood of e-mails and letters from the public. Having previously ruled out participation in fair trade, it now says the door remains open.

In addition, opposition is growing to the injustice of a global trading system that allows developed countries to pay their farmers some \$360 billion in annual subsidies. According to Bryan Lewin, an economist at the World Bank, those subsidies "wipe out the benefit of aid to the developing world," which amounts to just \$50 billion annually.

Moreover, subsidies and tariff barriers applied by the North to many agricultural products mean that farmers in the developing world simply can't compete, deterring coffee growers from diversifying into other crops. Oxfam's Bloomer says, "The challenge is to make trade fair. This is not about charity, but about solidarity in the face of human misery."

In practice, SOPPEXCCA's Ismael is very clear about what that means: "What we want is a fair price for our coffee. With that we can pursue our own development, without the need for people to offer us clothes or money for schools. ... Buying coffee at prices that are too low, and then giving a loaf of bread with the other hand, is not the kind of solidarity we want." ■

School Choice Planned Parenthoods look local

By Brett Schaeffer

EL CERRITO, CALIFORNIA—Thanks to a year-old Planned Parenthood program funded by a state health grant, a 15-year-old girl at California's El Cerrito High School can get an AIDS test, a prescription for birth control pills and a gynecological referral—all on her way to cheer-leading practice.

The local program is a first for the national health care organization, and is seen by choice advocates as a local antidote to the increasing threat to reproductive rights from the White House and Republican-controlled Congress.

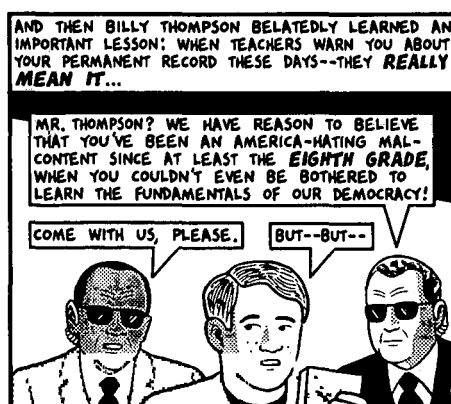
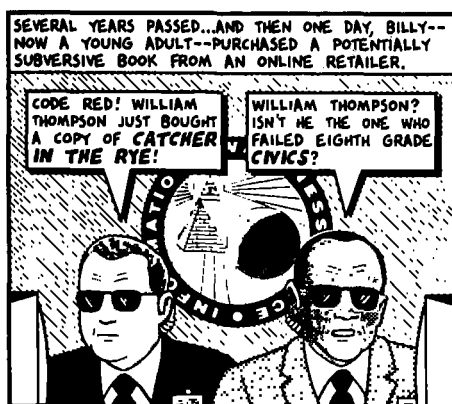
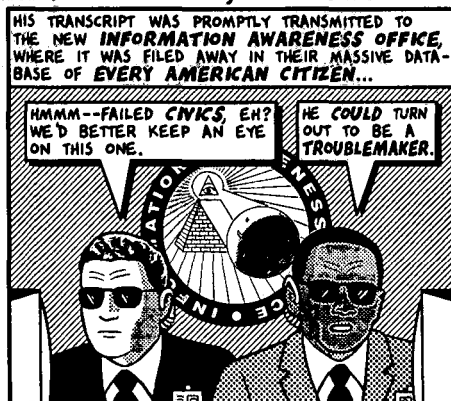
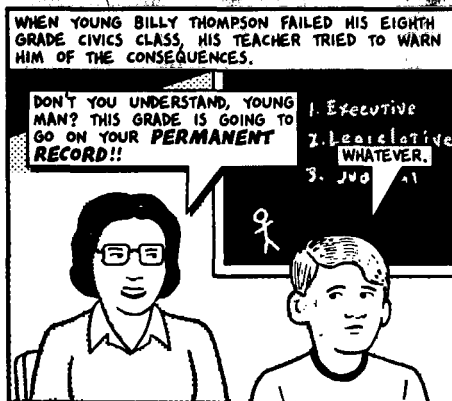
In this case, the innovative new program emerged from a direct health care need and a Planned Parenthood affiliate's ability to act quickly, says Planned Parenthood spokeswoman Adina Quijada. "The members of the Shasta-Diablo affiliate saw an opportunity to provide an indispensable service to a particular community, and they took it," she says. "It could be opening the door for other affiliates to do the same."

In the past, Planned Parenthood branches in California have offered teen pregnancy, substance abuse and HIV prevention programs at schools. Under the new clinical program at Bay Area schools, teens have access to birth control pills and screening for sexually transmitted diseases, and can make appointments for off-site exams. A registered nurse, supervised by a Planned Parenthood medical director, provides the clinical services, which are available after classes at each school's health center one day a week.

The program makes it much easier for teens to have access to quality health and reproductive care, says Joe Rose, associate vice president for community services and education at the Shasta-Diablo office. Teens may be reluctant or simply unable to travel to a Planned Parenthood clinic—or any other health clinic. Having clinical services available at school eliminates the transportation problem, and can go a long way toward solving a

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



health crisis. While his organization has seen a recent decline in teen birth rates, the incidence of the sexually transmitted disease chlamydia has jumped 24 percent in the past five years for area teens. "This is a serious health issue," he says.

Planned Parenthood last year initiated the clinical services program at El Cerrito, a few miles north of Berkeley, and is now expanding it to other area high schools where health data show high rates of teen births and sexually transmitted diseases.

The program is the result of strong support at the state and local levels. In September, California officials also signed into law several other progressive measures, blocking public access to the names and addresses of clinics and patients to protect women's health clinics and their patients, and requiring all accredited medical schools to provide abortion training for future obstetricians and gynecologists.

In addition, emergency-room staff will now be required to inform victims of sex-

ual abuse about emergency contraception, and administer it for free if asked. Nurses and midwives are also free to prescribe abortion drugs such as RU-486. Finally, the state formally reaffirmed its commitment to *Roe v. Wade*, even if

El Cerrito High is located, teen birth rates dropped 7.5 percent, according to Heather Hoell, public affairs director at the Shasta-Diablo affiliate. Hoell says there is a direct correlation between her office's work in the school and the declining teen birth rate.

To date, no other Planned Parenthood affiliates have launched a similar program, though Quijada says many are watching how it fares. "Other affiliates want to be able to do this," she says.

In October of this year, school boards in the nearby towns of Vallejo and Crockett approved identical programs for their high schools, and at least two more high schools in the Bay Area are considering adopting the program, Rose says.

Bill Pendergast is the president of the Vallejo Board of Education, which unanimously approved the program. "Anything we can do to prevent unwanted pregnancies and help people make informed decisions," he says, "we should be doing." ■



Expanding to high schools in California.

stricter limits on abortion are imposed at the federal level.

California has typically recorded one of the nation's highest teen birth rates, but in 2001, teen birth rates declined throughout the state. In Contra Costa County, where

IN SHORT

Crank Calls

Are abortion providers covering up and failing to report the sexual exploitation of underage girls? The anti-choice group Life Dynamics says yes, and is compiling videos for police and lawmakers to prove it. The problem: The evidence is based on phony telephone calls.

The videos summarize an investigation publicized by the Texas-based organization last spring. An anti-choice activist pretending to be a 13-year-old girl impregnated by her 22-year-old boyfriend—defined as statutory rape in every state—called some 800 Planned Parenthood and National Abortion Federation clinics in 49 states.

The caller said she wanted an abortion to conceal her sexual activity from her parents. The results, compiled at www.childpredator.com, a site affiliated with Life Dynamics, show that more than 90 percent of clinics "failed to comply" with mandatory child abuse reporting laws.

But Stephanie Mueller, a spokeswoman for the NAF, told Fox News that child abuse reporting laws vary by state, often giving health care workers the benefit of the doubt in reporting suspected abuse. Regardless of how complicated the laws may be, NAF Executive Director Vicki Saporta says clinics across the country always comply (see "Lie, Distort, Harass," October 14, 2002).

Moreover, though health care workers must report suspected abuse after office visits, they are not required to report phone calls "because you have no idea who is on the other end," says Roger Evans, director of litigation for Planned Parenthood.

Nevertheless, Life Dynamics says the half-hour videos will be tai-

lored to varying child protection laws, giving officials "easy access to evidence in their specific state."—LR

Marching for Peace

On November 20, thousands of students across the country raised a hopeful sign of peace as a part of the "Not in Our Name" movement. Student actions varied from massive student walkouts to silent vigils.

Thousands of New York City students, from high schoolers to post-grads, took the message to the streets. The protest culminated in a gathering at Ground Zero, where the students chanted: "They want us silent, they want us tame, this war on Iraq is not in our name!"

In the Chicago loop, 400 students gathered behind the theme "Money for Schools, Not War." Students at Berkeley distributed thousands of stickers that said, "We Won't Fight Your War." And at the University of Northern Iowa, students staged a "die-in," collapsing on the floor of the student union to protest the looming war.

In Philadelphia, where more than 300 students marched to City Hall, Lauren Tarantino, a University of Pennsylvania senior, spoke about how she became involved in political protests for the first time. "I didn't pay attention to what's going on in the world until I got to college," she said. "We'd rather live in a bubble. ... It's too difficult to realize we live in a country that does horrible things in the world." —BG

BY LIZ RAAP AND
BEN GARVEY

Don't Tread on Them

Cities move to protect the Bill of Rights

By Dave Lindorff

In the wake of the Republicans' November 5 election sweep, it would be easy to assume that niceties like freedom of expression and the right to a fair trial and equal protection under the law are no longer of concern to Americans. That would be wrong.

Over the past few months, towns, cities and counties in 24 states have been passing or considering passing resolutions in defense of civil rights and liberties. These resolutions, while they have no binding

effect upon federal authorities, make it clear that many communities, even post-9/11 and with concerns about continued terrorist threats, ardently value the protections of the Bill of Rights.

"The resolutions are intended to get a dialogue going," says teacher and Northampton City Council President Mike Bardsley, who championed one of the first "Bill of Rights Defense" resolutions, passed in that western Massachusetts town last May.

The Northampton resolution, which is now being offered as model legislation for other communities, calls on local law enforcement agencies to "preserve residents' freedom of speech, religion, assembly and privacy, rights to counsel and due process in judicial proceedings," and to protect residents from "unreasonable searches and seizures, even if requested or authorized to infringe upon these rights by federal law enforcement

acting under new powers granted by the USA PATRIOT Act."

The resolution, which eventually won the support of the local chief of police, further instructs federal authorities acting within Northampton not to engage in detentions without charge or in racial profiling. It calls on federal authorities and state police to report publicly any secret spying or detentions conducted under the auspices of the USA PATRIOT Act, new executive orders of the president, or "COINTELPRO-type regulations."

Finally, the resolution calls on the state's congressional delegation to monitor implementation of the USA PATRIOT Act and to seek repeal of those portions that "violate the fundamental rights and liberties as stated in the constitutions of the Commonwealth [of Massachusetts] and the United States."

So far, more than 15 resolutions resembling the Northampton measure have

Sodom vs. Saddam 2.1

Poor Harvey John "Jack" McGeorge. A former Marine and Secret Service agent with experience in disposing chemical and biological agents, he was ready to serve the cause of world peace as a U.N. weapons inspector in Iraq. Then the world found out he was a sado-masochist.

He's not the kind of sado-masochist that would, say, rule a Middle Eastern country through torture and mass murder. He's the kind that would serve as a founding officer of the Leather Leadership Conference, an outfit that trains "current and potential leaders of the sado-masochism/leather/fetish community." There's a difference, you know.

According to the *Washington Post*, McGeorge is a co-founder of Black Rose, "a pansexual S&M group," and a past leader of something called the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom. But that's just in his spare time. He also runs a firm called Public Safety Group Inc., which offers

seminars on chemical and biological weapons, along with other "bioterror products."

When confronted by the *Post* about his sexual proclivities, McGeorge said he would resign from the U.N. team if the newspaper publicized them. "I have been very upfront with people in the past about what I do, and it has never prevented me from getting a job or doing service," McGeorge said. "I am who I am. I am not ashamed of who I am—not one bit."

Nor should he be. In fact, the world might feel a little safer knowing a leather man was on the case.

Toys in the Trunk 3.5

Need another reason not to live in Texas? Kathy Grubbs, a 47-year-old traveling saleswoman, was driving drunk near the town of White Oak. The cops pulled her over, searched her truck, and found 17 sex toys and other products. Grubbs sells them, it turns out, in a version of the Tupperware Party. Big deal, right? Yes, it is. Possess-

ing more than six dildos implies intent to distribute, missy. And that's a felony in the Lone Star State. According to the *Longview News-Journal*, Grubbs could face a couple years in jail for it.

Sooey Cum Laude 2.2

When it serves its own interests, the American academy likes to explain itself as a charmingly archaic institution. Graduate students and adjunct facultoids, for example, are not ruthlessly exploited wage-earners—they are apprentices.

But what are we to make of Lindenwood University, a liberal arts college in St. Charles, Missouri, which accepts tuition payment in pigs? According to the *Los Angeles Times*, Lindenwood accepted some 50 hogs in

lieu of the \$22,000 it would have cost farm girl Sally Miller for her junior and senior years. Sally's folks haven't been treated too nicely by the commodities markets of late. So Lindenwood President Dennis Spellmann thought outside the box and hit upon the hogs-for-learning scheme.

Heart-warming as the story may be, it belies a disturbing trend. Tuition inflation has outstripped median wage growth by 400 percent in the past two decades, with no sign of abating, and federal financial aid has been cut drastically.





Taking on Wal-Mart: Workers protest outside a Wal-Mart in Alexandria, Virginia. On November 24, The People's Campaign for Justice, which includes the AFL-CIO, the United Food and Commercial Workers Union and numerous other groups, launched a national day of action against the massive discount chain. The campaign accuses Wal-Mart of anti-union activity and charging workers exorbitant health insurance premiums. A class action lawsuit against Wal-Mart is currently underway; plaintiffs say Wal-Mart does not pay overtime to its workers, which is against federal law.

been passed by governing bodies in Gainesville, Florida; Amherst, Leverett and Cambridge, Massachusetts; Boulder and Denver, Colorado; Ann Arbor, Michigan; Berkeley, California; Carrboro, North Carolina; Madison, Wisconsin; and Takoma Park, Maryland (the suburban home of many federal workers, including some who work for federal law enforcement agencies). Some go even further than Northampton's, instructing local police not to cooperate with the INS in detaining people.

Similar resolutions are being considered by more than 40 other local governments, including Asheville and Greensboro, North Carolina; Portland, Oregon; Kansas City, Missouri; and Missoula, Montana. There are even efforts underway to win passage of Bill of Rights defense resolutions in New York City and in Montgomery County, Maryland, site of most of the recent sniper shootings (Takoma Park, a part of Montgomery County, passed its resolution October 28, shortly after capture of the suspects).

Americans may be frightened of terrorism, but there seems to be a powerful grassroots concern, too, that basic American freedoms are under threat.

That's certainly what happened in the case of the 342-page USA PATRIOT Act, passed with little debate and even less dissent by Congress six weeks after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Brainchild of Attorney General John Ashcroft, the act is a hodgepodge of legislation that essentially frees up agencies to spy domestically, grants broad police and surveillance authority to the executive branch, and gives federal authorities broad new investigative powers without the need to go to court for a warrant. People using the wrong keyword in a Google search could now find themselves triggering a monitoring of their computer activity, for example. Detentions without trial—usually considered the hallmark of a totalitarian society—are also authorized by the act.

"I think a lot of people think in boxes," says Bardsley, his voice still hoarse from a

full day spent outside (futilely) haranguing voters to vote Democratic on Election Day. "They think that what happens nationally won't affect them locally. A measure like this getting debated in city council and in the local media helps to show people how laws like the USA PATRIOT Act will affect them in their local communities, where it lets police look at the books you take out from the library or the videos you rent."

The American Civil Liberties Union recently began promoting passage of local Bill of Rights defense resolutions as part of its national campaign in defense of civil liberties. Says Damon Moglen, the group's national field coordinator, "We're building a grassroots movement that says: 'Enough is enough! We can be safe and free.' After this election ... it has become more important than ever to take action at the local level. We will pass these resolutions across the country, and then we'll bring the issue back to Congress." ■

Going AWOL

Russian soldiers desert en masse

By Fred Weir

Moscow—Igor ran away from his central Russian army unit just two months after being inducted. He says he fled because he was repeatedly beaten and sexually abused by older soldiers.

"I'm not against serving in the army, but I won't go back to that unit," says the thin, pimply faced 18-year-old, one of dozens of young military deserters who seek refuge at offices of the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers on any given day. Sergei says officers in his battalion, stationed near the city of Vladimir, organized conscripts into begging rings and forced them to burglarize in local homes. He claims he was beaten with a shovel when he refused.

These young men, and the appalling tales many of them tell, are one worrisome signal that the comprehensive military

reform announced a year ago by the Kremlin may be collapsing. In an unusually frank speech in May, the Russian army's chief of staff, Gen. Anatoly Kvashnin, admitted that the officer corps is "bogged down in embezzlement and corruption" and that a decade of underfunding and failed reform has left the armed forces in "a post-critical situation."

Breaking decades of secrecy on the subject, the Defense Ministry has conceded that 2,265 conscripts deserted in the first half of 2002, of whom more than 800 are still missing from their units.

The Soldiers' Mothers, which works directly with most runaways, says the true number of deserters is more like 40,000 annually. "The system of compulsory military service in this country is almost indistinguishable from prison," says Natalya Shvol of the group's Moscow office. "In my experience, no young man runs away from his unit except under the most extreme conditions."

The Russian armed forces have about 2 million personnel, including some 800,000 conscripts, who serve a compulsory two years. Twice-yearly conscription drives pull in about a quarter-million young men, though most well-connected families manage to arrange exemptions for their sons. "Within a month of the regular conscription intake, the boys start turning up in our office with tales that would curl your hair," says Natalya Serdyukova of the Soldiers' Mothers.

In November 2001, President Vladimir Putin announced a plan to transform Russia's elephantine, 19th-century conscript army into a much smaller, all-volunteer service by 2010. He decreed a one-year experiment that would turn a division based in Pskov into an all-professional model unit that could act as a guide for the rest of the army. But in September, the officer in

charge of the plan announced it could not be implemented due to a lack of funds to attract and keep suitable volunteers.

Another key plank in Putin's military reform was a new law on alternative service, meant to breathe life into the right of conscientious objection stipulated in Russia's 1993 constitution. But the long-awaited law, passed by the State Duma in July, has appalled human rights workers. Each applicant for alternative service must prove his pacifist credentials before a military tribunal, then accept three years service (instead of two). "Those on alternative service will live in identical conditions to other conscripts, for a longer period of time, and their only privilege will be not to bear arms," says Vladimir Urban, a military expert with the *Novye Izvestia* newspaper. "It just looks like a punishment prescribed for those who don't want to serve in the army."

Russian authorities have at least been forced to acknowledge the growing scale of military desertions. In a growing number of cases, conscripts are fleeing with their weapons, sometimes leading to violence. In August, two young men who deserted from a border patrol unit in the war-torn region of Chechnya killed eight of their own comrades while escaping. After being apprehended, the two said they did it because they were "sick and tired" of being beaten and abused by the older soldiers.

In September, a group of 54 young soldiers walked away from an army firing range near Volgograd and marched together to Mother's Right, a local human rights group, to complain they had been brutalized by their officers. That episode led Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov to threaten commanders with "serious penalties" when their conscripts run away. "This sort of thing happens because officers don't work properly with people," Ivanov fumed in a September speech to the Duma.

But experts say the major military overhaul laid out by Putin just a year ago has already expired. "Military reform has run into a brick wall due to resistance from the officer corps and insufficient resources to change anything," says Sergei Kazyonov, an expert with the Center for National Security and Strategic Studies in Moscow. "As long as the whole country is in a state of disorder, why should we expect the army to be different?" ■



Yikes: November's approval of the Homeland Security Bill sharply increased funding to the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency's Office of Information Awareness, whose logo is pictured here. Run by John M. Poindexter, convicted in 1990 for his role in the Iran-Contra scandals, the OIA's purpose is to find ways to monitor the Internet and other domestic electronic activity for use in government investigations (see "Big Brother is Watching," April 15, 2002).

Foreign Correspondent

Award-winning British journalist Robert Fisk, Middle East correspondent for the Independent in London, took his American colleagues to task in a recent series of lectures titled, "September 11: Ask Who Did It, but for Heaven's Sake Don't Ask Why." Decrying "vapid, hapless and gutless journalism," Fisk rails against "the facile acceptance of authority" by most journalists in the post-9/11 era. Fisk spoke with *In These Times* in October after a lecture at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana.

Most journalists today work for profit-driven media conglomerates. Do you feel pressure from your editors not to offend advertisers? Is the *Independent* truly independent?

The great thing about the *Independent* is that its foundation and the basis of its readers' loyalty is they know that what we write is what will appear in print. The moment we stop doing that, they're not going to buy us. They can go elsewhere. If someone comes along and says, "You will lose advertising if I continue to read this revolting piece about"—I don't know, say, environmentalism—then we'll have to do without the advertising, because otherwise we'll lose the readers.

What drew you to journalism?

I wanted to be a journalist from the age of 12 after I saw Alfred Hitchcock's film *Foreign Correspondent*, with Joel McCrea as Huntley Haverstock with the *New York Daily Globe*; his editor wanted to send him to Europe because the war was about to break out.

I saw that film, and I never ever wanted to be anything but a journalist. He goes to Europe, chases spies, sees the assassination of a Dutch diplomat, rescues prisoners of the Nazis, gets shot down in the Atlantic, survives to file his scoop and gets the most gorgeous bird in the movie. And I thought, "This is the job!"

My father didn't want me to be a journalist. He wanted me to be a doctor or lawyer. Of course, when I joined the *Times* of London, before the *Independent*, he said he "always" wanted me to be a journalist—but he didn't.

Oddly enough, the journalism that I do in the Middle East is very much like being a lawyer. You're constantly having to produce the evidence and persuade the jury—the readers—that you're right.

Many on the American left feel the war effort serves to deflect attention from domestic problems. The progressive community in this country is portrayed as paranoid in its concerns about the economy and education.

Look, the problem with the progressive, left activists in this country is that all they do is talk to each other. I went to a seminar at an East Coast college and all these middle-class women were talking about bridge-building between progressives and activists and socialists, and they wanted to build a bridge to the mainstream press. I said, "It's irredeemable. Don't waste your time. First of all, stop calling it mainstream. Start calling *your* press mainstream and call the other alternative."

I said, "Look, I'm not going to give you advice on what to do. I'm a journalist. But if you want to reach out to people, stop talking to each other in your privileged little room

text is not supported by editors, and it's not underwritten by advertisers.

First of all, what are journalists for? In Britain, a degree in journalism doesn't get you anywhere in newspapering. They want to see what you write. One of the problems here is that the idea of objectivity has been taken to such absurd lengths you can no longer tell the reader what's going on.

If you were reporting in the 18th century on the slave trade, would you give equal time to the prisoners and the slave ship captain? If you were present at the liberation of an extermination camp, would you give equal time to the SS as well as the prisoners? No. Journalists have to have a moral sense of what the story is. One of the problems with the American journalists—I don't work with them, I don't work with other journalists, I'm on my own—but when I do meet them, they're much more interesting to

"The problem with the progressive, left activists in this country is that all they do is talk to each other."

—Robert Fisk

and talk to ordinary Americans: the truck drivers and the rail crews and the bellhops whose brothers and fathers are going to be sent to Iraq."

People are convinced they are being lied to. That's why they come to my lectures—because they think they're being lied to, and they want to know what's going on. That's why I'm being invited. I don't take any money for it. I'm not doing it for money.

Really?

I've no honorariums. They have to pay business class airfare and hotel, that's it—nothing else. I don't take a penny from it. And I'm coming over here an average of every three or four weeks. I don't want anyone to be able to say that I say what I say because I'm paid to say it.

At your lecture, you said, "I hate the 'what' and the 'where' stories that leave out the 'why.' " This asking why and giving the con-

listen to than they are to read. Because what they know is not what goes into the story.

Are you now convinced that Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda were responsible for the horrific events of September 11?

[Sigh] Unless he said that to me directly, I can't be convinced, but that doesn't mean that I'm not pretty certain. I think it's him. I did from the very beginning—most probably it was.

You know that the British mysteriously produced this tape of bin Laden in Jalalabad. It was incomprehensible, you can't understand what he said. It is him, I think, but the famous CIA produced the captions. And I might not have believed the captions were it not for the fact that he started talking about, "One of our brothers had a dream," and he said that to me. In 1996 he told me, "One of our brothers had a dream," not about planes, but about something different. And when I saw that, I thought, "Oh, oh, that does sound like the real McCoy." ■

The Liberal Media Strike Again

By Ana Marie Cox

Until recently, I've secretly applauded the attempts of right-wing ideologues to document "liberal media bias." Tallying up how often Katie Couric lauds Democrats, keeping tabs on "anti-gun" themes in prime-time television—I can think of no better way to spend Richard Mellon Scaife's easily inherited millions than to employ an army of interns with click counters and remote controls.

With media ownership rapidly being consolidated and increasingly driven by explicitly pro-business, if not actually "conservative," aims, hunting for liberal bias among *Survivor* clones and the razzle-dazzle soft news of cable networks seemed like a waste of time.

Clearly, I was mistaken.

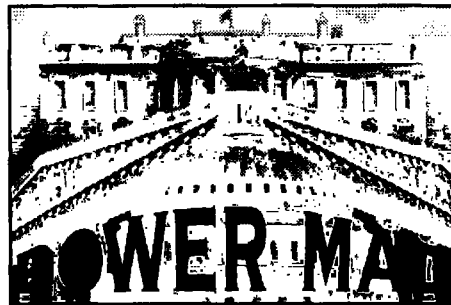
It turns out that arguing about media bias is pretty much the only argument one can have about media today. Witness the sustained electronic howl that met Tom Daschle's and Al Gore's remarks about the power of particularly right-wing media entities. Daschle makes some not particularly well-thought-out comments connecting high-pitched rhetoric to personal threats, then Gore makes some slightly more coherent observations about the link between Fox News and the GOP, and a thousand op-eds are born.

Never mind that, on a purely factual basis, neither one's comments are very controversial. Daschle has been threatened, but pundits asking Daschle for examples of violent speech were off the mark about the real flaw in Daschle's complaint. The true civil libertarian would be alarmed not by the implication that a journalists' commentary would incite violence, but by the implication that the journalist is responsible for that violence.

As for Gore's assertion that the *Washington Times* and Fox News hew to the marching orders of the White House's Mayberry Machiavellis (in the memorable phrasing of the very former Bush adviser John Dilulio)—where is the debatable point in that? Tony Blankley, the *Washington Times*' opinion editor, has

made much of his ties to Republican activists on the Hill, even used them as sources in editorials. And need we remind anyone that John "Let Me Call Florida" Ellis, the head of Fox's election coverage in 2000, is Dubya's cousin?

Even more troubling, if equally apparent, than the White House calling the shots at Fox, is Fox calling the shots at the White House, a matter raised



almost tangentially in the Bob Woodward play-by-play, *Bush at War*. Woodward reports that in the days after 9/11, Fox chairman Roger Ailes—who had worked as a media adviser for the president's father—wrote Bush a note on how to proceed. "The American public would tolerate waiting and would be patient, but only as long as they were convinced that Bush was using the harshest measures possible," Woodward writes, describing Ailes' memo. "Support would dissipate if the public did not see Bush acting harshly."

But facts never get in the way of a good bias debate. And a really good bias debate can obscure the facts. Carping on left-right tilt, for instance, somehow has become the focus of the Federal Communications Commission in their review of media ownership restrictions. The FCC—after pressure was put on them by various public interest groups—recently released the studies that will inform their decision on whether to loosen media consolidation guidelines.

One study takes as its mission to examine the "hypothesis" that fewer owners mean less diversity of opinions. Their

examination consisted of looking at the stories produced during the last 15 days of the 2000 presidential campaign of different media outlets (television stations and newspapers) owned by the same corporations. These stories were then coded either "pro-Bush" or "pro-Gore" and totaled and averaged to give what the study's authors called a "slant coefficient." In finding that these different outlets did not produce the exact same ratio of pro-Bush and pro-Gore stories, the authors concluded that "common ownership of a newspaper and a television station in a community does not result in a predictable pattern of news coverage and commentary."

Well, it's nice to know that with billions of dollars and an entire free press at stake, the federal government will be basing their opinion on one two-week study of dubious authority. The logical errors contained in the study would keep battalions of Scaife interns busy, were they to turn their attention away from Phil Donahue. That it equated "anti-Bush" and "pro-Gore," as well as "anti-Gore" and "pro-Bush" (which it did) is nothing compared to their de facto equating of Bush and Gore to a real contest or real choice. And there's no room

Al Gore says Fox News hews to the marching orders of the Mayberry Machiavellis. Where is the debatable point in that?

at all on their scorecard for anyone who's not Bush or Gore.

This is the kind of thinking that pervades the FCC. Chairman Michael Powell recently told the *New York Times*: "Common ownership can lead to more diversity. What does the owner get for having duplicative products? I don't know why you'd want to have two newspapers that say the same thing. I would say, 'Let's make one Democratic, let's make one Republican.'"

That this in itself represents a narrowing of options doesn't seem to have occurred to him. ■

The Bogeyman of Neo-Fascism

By Steven Hill

Several months ago, American media outlets were sounding shrill alarms over the rise of the far right in Europe. But recent election results in Germany, Sweden, Austria and elsewhere reveal that the panic button was pushed prematurely.

In Germany, the red-green coalition of Social Democrats and the Green Party eked out a close victory in September. In Sweden, the ruling Social Democrats scored an unexpected victory, handily beating predictions. Recent elections also saw center-left governments take the reins in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

Meanwhile, the fortunes of the far right have fallen on harder times. Following the media frenzy over France's Jean-Marie Le Pen making the runoff in their presidential election, his party failed to win a single seat in the National Assembly races. In Austria, the bogeyman of Europe who started the far-right alarm, Jörg Haider, saw his Freedom Party plummet. After a stunning upset in the Netherlands for the assassinated Pim Fortuyn's party, internal bickering led to its collapse, and the party is expected to virtually disappear when new elections are held on January 22.

So the scary forecasts of the American media were overblown considerably. But this is nothing new. American reportage on Europe usually is fraught with half-truths and *Hogan's Heroes* stereotyping.

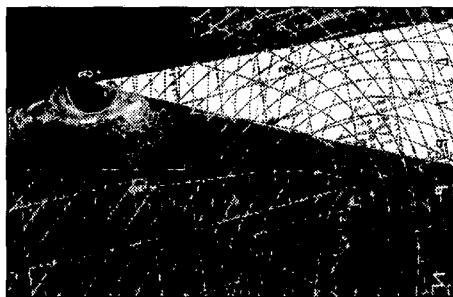
Any assessment of the see-saw fortunes of the right in Europe must begin here: On the political spectrum, the European center is far to the left compared to the American center.

Europeans still have free health care for all, cradle to grave; free education through university level; comparatively generous retirement for their elderly; an average of five weeks paid vacation; more sick leave and parental leave; and a shorter work week (as short as 35 hours in some countries) with comparable wages for their workers. Social spending in Europe runs some 50 percent above that in the United States. Environmental protections, food safety and labor laws are the envy of U.S. activists.

In short, the European political center is where the American left would love to

be. And it is in this context that one must understand the recent roller coaster of the European far right.

The leaders and political parties known as the "far right" in Europe for the most part do not seek to overturn the European welfare state or a proactive role for government regulation. On the contrary, they accept its existence to a degree even the Democratic Party doesn't accept today.



In some countries, the far-right parties attained their recent electoral successes by defending the welfare state and government regulations that the center-left parties had been rolling back for the last few years. Their leaders called for things like a recommitment to quality public health care, mass transit and subsidized housing, as well as protection of the public pension and education systems.

Moreover, in almost all respects the right in Europe is not nearly as far right—nor as politically successful—as the right in the United States. Fundamentalist Christian Tom Delay is the new House Majority Leader, one step below the speaker. Jesse Helms, the man that columnist David Broder called "the last prominent unabashed white racist" in Congress, was a de facto Secretary of State from his perch atop the Senate Foreign Relations Committee throughout the '90s. David Duke came much closer to winning big prizes like Louisiana governor's mansion than Le Pen, stuck at his marginally influential 18 percent level, could ever dream about. And American mainstream parties are not above bombastic anti-immigrant or racist rhetoric or policy; indeed, these have been a political staple here for some time.

Thus, in many respects, European

multiparty politics do not fit the old left-right axis typically employed by American journalists. It's comparing apples and oranges.

Germany now has a greater percentage of foreign-born persons than the United States, the self-professed "nation of immigrants." Many European countries have similar demographics. The far right for the most part has been the only sector willing to confront hard questions concerning not only immigration and crime, but also the generous European welfare system and how it is being affected by globalization and immigration. The European left suddenly finds itself caught flat-footed when it comes to its own positions regarding these issues. As one European commentator has written, "The Social, Christian and Liberal Democrats have left discussion of the continent's most important issues in the hands of obscure demagogues, amateurs and con artists."

This is not to discount that, just like in the United States, racism and xenophobia are afoot on the European continent. The idea of European society as a "melting pot" or "rainbow quilt" is new, and in this era of globalization, there undoubtedly will be strains for some time to come. And charlatan politicians will make careers out of exploiting public insecurities and scrambling the traditional lines between political left and right.

Europe's right is not nearly as far right, nor as politically successful, as its American counterpart.

But to portray Europe as a hotbed of neo-Nazi and fascists is erroneous and hyperbolic. On the contrary, Europe is a mainstay of social democracy, proportional representation and the surviving welfare state. Rather than tarring Europe with hysteria about rising neo-Fascism, Americans should be looking toward Europe as the ideological alternative to American free market, "winner take all" conservatism. ■

Steven Hill is senior analyst for the Center for Voting and Democracy (www.fairvote.org) and author of *Fixing Elections: The Failure of America's Winner Take All Politics*.

UNIONS AGAINST THE WAR?

The labor movement grows more skeptical of Bush's plans for Iraq

By David Moberg

When members of a 21,000-member Teamsters local in Chicago proposed taking a stand against war in Iraq in mid-October, Local 705 Secretary-Treasurer Jerry Zero thought "it sounded like a good resolution we could have some debate over."

But the results surprised even Zero, as Teamsters took the floor, many identifying themselves as veterans of wars from Vietnam to Desert Storm. "We had 400 members [at the meeting] and all of the debate was one-sided against the war," Zero says. "There was only one vote against the resolution. I was amazed. I expected an even split."

Zero himself argued that there's no need for war. "We're looking at the oil there," he says. "Maybe Bush is using it as an excuse to cover up other shortcomings of the administration. We're looking at an Iraq that has no ties I can see with bin Laden or other terrorist groups and letting other countries like Saudi Arabia, that do have ties, slide on by."

All unions should take a stand, Zero says, since the prospect of war "affects your members, their families, their kids. They talk about this costing \$200 billion, and who knows how long we'll have to stay there and how many more billions. Where will they get that money? They just gave it away with tax cuts to wealthy people."

Zero's outspoken public stance is still rare in the labor movement. But privately many union leaders express deep reservations or personal opposition to a war in Iraq. Although there was initially strong labor support after the 9/11 attacks for the war on terrorism and bombing of Afghanistan, union distrust of Bush has grown dramatically with the administration's relentless attacks on the labor movement and civil liberties under the guise of national security, as well as its use of the president's wartime popularity to push an extremely pro-business legislative agenda.

However, many union leaders fear that opposing the war will divert scarce resources to an effort that may ultimately divide their members. Although some limited polling suggests that

union members roughly mirror general public opinion on war against Iraq, there are also anecdotal indications—like Zero's experience—that union members may be receptive to educational efforts against a unilateral U.S. war. But so far few labor unions have even taken the simple step of providing alternative views—the labor equivalent of campus teach-ins—that would help members better understand what's at stake.

On October 7, as Congress was nearing a vote on Bush's power to act militarily against Iraq, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney sent a letter to Congress that expressed concerns about Bush's Iraq policy but did not urge a vote against the legislation. Sweeney argued that U.S. policies on Iraq should not distract from pursuit of al-Qaeda terrorists, and that they should reinforce international law, the United Nations and broader, multilateral alliances against terrorism. Sweeney also said that the fight against terrorism was not simply military, but required more global attention to basic human rights.

He criticized the politicization of the prospective war—such as Republican claims that Democrats were unpatriotic for trying to protect the rights of workers in the new Homeland Security department—and suggested that the timing of the campaign against Iraq was itself politically motivated. Urging a full debate about the possible costs and casualties, he concluded, "We must assure [the sons and daughters of working families] that war is the last option, not the first, used to resolve this conflict before we ask them to put themselves in harm's way to protect the rest of us."

Sweeney's letter reflected support from the AFL-CIO Executive Council's international affairs committee, which had invited former Clinton administration officials Sandy Berger and John Podesta to discuss national security and political issues related to Iraq. It circulated among the whole executive council, without dissent, before being sent to Congress. The AFL-CIO insists that it is not an "anti-war" position, even though it is a much more skeptical view of presidential war-making than the AFL-CIO has historically taken.

There has been almost no explicit labor support for war in Iraq, although Teamsters President James Hoffa did join the White House-orchestrated Committee for the Liberation of Iraq. "You cannot have a conversation with anyone inside the labor movement who thinks we should have a war," says veteran union organizer Bob Muehlenkamp, who is trying to mobilize labor opposition. "Two things that come out particularly strong are the focus on economic consequences and whose kids fight this war."

Despite their opposition to terrorism, he said, "people feel that Bush has not made a case" for invading Iraq. Muehlenkamp hopes that unions will feel comfortable joining with a newly formed Keep America Safe/Win Without War campaign, which includes the National Council of Churches, Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities, the Rainbow/Push Coalition and other groups.

Since last summer there has been steady growth in labor opposition to a war from local unions, central labor councils, state federations and other groups, and a few high-ranking labor leaders have also spoken out individually. "Personally, I'm extremely disturbed about it," says Hotel and Restaurant Employees (HERE) President John Wilhelm. "I thought that post-9/11, the focus was on terrorism and al-Qaeda. I don't know where this Iraq venture came from. I'm also very concerned about what I think will be a real disaster for our members, just in terms of their jobs."

Gloria Johnson, president of the Coalition of Labor Union Women and a member of the AFL-CIO Executive Council, shares skepticism about the abrupt shift from terrorism to Iraq. "I have not read or seen anything that in my opinion at this point justifies the war," she says. "I sincerely hope that reports that come out from Iraq with the searching going on will demonstrate that a war will not be needed. I'm concerned about the loss of lives of our kids. I'm concerned about the tremendous focus of money, especially since we're going pretty much alone."

"We think the rush to attack Iraq is a mistake," adds Bruce Raynor, president of UNITE, the union of apparel and textile workers. "I think the president ought to grab a gun and lead the charge if he wants to do that. But he's proposing to send our kids. But Saddam Hussein is a bad guy. If the United Nations supports an intervention against Saddam because he has weapons of mass destruction, we would be supportive of that."

Shortly after Sweeney's letter to Congress, Local 1199, the 220,000-member New York health care union, took out a full-page ad in the *New York Times* opposing war in Iraq. California SEIU Local 250 launched an extensive educational campaign among its 85,000 members after coming out against war. "I think it's our fundamental responsibility to take a stand and lead on it," says Local 250 President Sal Roselli. "Some people see it as a risk, but risk is how we accomplish change and justice for workers."

Union members and leaders often see Bush's war strategies as linked to his "war on labor." Gene Bruskin, secretary-treasurer of the Food and Allied Service Trades division of the AFL-CIO, wrote to Sweeney in October that Bush's policies

were "a Trojan horse for his pro-corporate domestic and international agenda." Both his domestic and foreign policy are designed, Bruskin argued, to make "the world safe for U.S. multinationals," and "the labor movement must take the lead in opposing Bush's war policies if we are going to succeed at advancing our own goals."

Similarly, after the Seattle Central Labor Council voted to join October demonstrations against the war, Secretary-Treasurer Steve Williamson received broad support for his comments linking Bush's war plans to anti-worker policies, from intervening against the West Coast dockworkers in their contract negotiations and taking away the rights of Homeland Security workers to planning to privatize half of the federal work force and cutting taxes for the rich. "My premise was very simple," says Williamson, a former bricklayer. "Bush has two unilateral wars he's embarking on. One is war on Iraq. The other is war on working families."

So far, service and white-collar workers have taken the lead, but the opposition to war comes from many quarters. There are active anti-war labor groups in New York, Washington, San Francisco, Detroit, Seattle, Portland and other cities, some of which opposed the war in Afghanistan as well—a minority view that cost New York City anti-war labor leader Michael Letwin re-election as president of an Autoworkers local this fall.

"Bush has two unilateral wars he's embarking on. One is war in Iraq. The other is war on working families."

But opposition to the Iraq war has drawn more mainstream labor backing, including the Washington State Labor Council, United Electrical Workers, New York state nurses, the Wisconsin SEIU, the California Federation of Teachers, Pride at Work (the AFL-CIO gay workers organization), New Mexico carpenters, and central labor councils from such cities as San Francisco, San Jose and Oakland, California; Albany, Troy and Rochester, New York; and Duluth, Minnesota.

But most labor leaders, despite their own misgivings or opposition, remain cautious—preoccupied with other issues, seeking careful internal deliberations, fearful of dividing the labor movement, deferential to timid Democratic leaders, and reluctant to get far ahead of their members. They are also waiting to see what happens with inspections in Iraq and at the U.N. Security Council. Although labor movements in Europe are forcefully opposing war against Iraq, "the AFL-CIO is not going to get deeply involved in either the peace or war side because the divisions are too deep," one insider predicts.

But by raising doubts, encouraging debate and providing education about alternative strategies, the AFL-CIO could at least deny Bush some of his national security cover for the war at home and open the door for unions and leaders who want to more vigorously oppose the looming war in Iraq. ■



SAVING THE DEMOCRATS FROM THEMSELVES

Can progressives win the
battle for the party's future?

By John Nichols

When Rep. Marcy Kaptur briefly mounted a populist, reform-oriented campaign to lead House Democrats, Washington reporters rushed to figure out whether the Ohio congresswoman's candidacy posed a serious threat to the leadership juggernaut of House Whip Nancy Pelosi. The answer they got was blunt and unequivocal: Kaptur's crusade on behalf of what she called "the non-money wing of the Democratic Party" would go nowhere.

"Marcy's from outer space," grumbled a senior aide to a powerful liberal Democratic committee chairman. "She lives in another world. She doesn't speak the same language that the Democrats speak here."

The visceral reaction to Kaptur's candidacy—and, more precisely, to her pledge to remake the Democratic Party as a progressive populist force—wasn't just mouthed by the corrupt corporatists of the Democratic Leadership Council and the New Democrat Network that serves as its congressional wing. It also was echoed by labor-linked liberals and social progressives who had worked side-by-side with Kaptur on the most critical policy issues of the past two decades. Behind the scenes and off the record, House Democrats and their aides were quick to confide the generally held view that Kaptur was crazy to suggest that the Democratic Party might want

to hold a few less \$5,000-a-head fundraisers and a few more bake sales and fish fries. "Bake sales!" exclaimed an exasperated committee chair. "What the hell planet is Marcy Kaptur living on?"

What most congressional Democrats failed to recognize was that Kaptur did not come from another planet, but from the grassroots of the party. One of the few genuinely working-class members of Congress—she still lives in the neighborhood where she grew up and donates her congressional pay raises to charity—nothing that she proposed was out-of-sync with the ideals or the practical solutions being proposed and applauded in the union halls, neighborhood bars, coffee shops and campaign offices where Democrats gather.

The disconnect between the elected Democrats of Washington and the grassroots Democrats of America offers stark evidence of the crisis within the Democratic Party as it enters the most critical stage of its existence since the mid-1920s. Following a series of devastating electoral defeats, and facing new battles on an increasingly unfriendly political landscape, the party must decide how it will compete for power. Will it argue that it can better manage the implementation of a conservative agenda? Or that it seeks power in order to reject that agenda and chart a new direction for the nation?

In the aftermath of the 2002 election debacle—in which Democrats lost hundreds of races at the federal, state and local levels that political history and a reasonable analysis of polling data suggested they should have won—the party was given little opportunity to practice the healthy bloodletting that follows electoral mishaps in other lands. In Britain, Germany, France, Israel, India, Canada or Australia, devastating defeats are followed by rituals of resignation and reform that set losing parties on new and often radically different courses.

In the United States, however, the failure of Democrats to hold the Senate, take the House, gain a majority of governorships or retain control of the majority of state legislative seats led to little in the way of real change. Democratic National Committee chairman Terry McAuliffe, a man whose every appearance on national television pushes his party to a lower rung on the ladder of public

esteem, clung to his post like an indicted CEO trying to right the course of a sinking corporation. (Despite the loss of Congress and the vast majority of high-profile contests from Minnesota and Massachusetts to Texas and Florida,

among base voters who are having more and more trouble figuring out why it matters to vote Democratic. "When I talk to Democratic activists, they always tell me the same thing: Let's stop playing to the special interests and start appealing to the people who have just stopped voting," says Barbara Lawton, the new lieutenant governor of Wisconsin.

Lawton was outspent 3-to-1 in a Democratic primary but still beat the party establishment with a campaign pledging to fight for universal health care, public campaign financing and protection of reproductive rights. "Democrats in the county parties and the union locals and the pro-choice groups know that they don't have to raise the same amount of money as the Republicans," she says. "We can be outspent, so long as we speak to people about fundamental issues. But when our leaders chase after the big money, they weaken the message, and we lose."

Kaptur, who won her first campaign for Congress in 1982 after being outspent 2-to-1 by a Republican incumbent, actually raises money with bake sales and fish fries in Toledo and surrounding towns. And she still spends a lot of her time encouraging her constituents to get involved not just with her campaigns, but with broader policy issues. Northwest Ohio Peace Coalition activist Steve Miller got a call at home in October from Kaptur, who has been an ardent foe of war with Iraq. "She called to thank me for what we're doing," he recalls. "I was surprised. I don't normally get calls from congresspeople when I'm sitting around my kitchen, but she's saying the same things we've been saying."

"We should stand up not only for the steel industry, but also the textile workers in the Southeast, the auto-parts industry in the Midwest, and small businesses such as the tool-and-die shop owner and the family farmer all around the country."

NANCY KAPTUR

McAuliffe presented a "market-share" defense that noted 52 percent of Americans woke up on November 6 in states controlled by Democratic governors.) In the Senate, soon-to-be-former Majority Leader Tom Daschle surveyed his dramatically diminished domain and declared that what really ailed Democrats was not a lack of message or meaning—but Rush Limbaugh.

Only in the House and in the jockeying of potential 2004 presidential candidates was the prospect of a different course entertained with a minimum of seriousness. And the key word here is "minimum." Of all the senior Democrats who have attempted pronouncements regarding the party's direction, only Kaptur has articulated a vision that echoes grassroots sentiment. "To win our party must adopt a reform paradigm," explains Kaptur. "We will never raise more money than the Republicans—never. We must elevate the non-money wing of the Democratic Party and create populist symbols to convey our message."

To folks in Washington this may have sounded crazy. But to folks in Keokuk, Sioux Falls, Las Cruces, Buffalo and Lansing, where Democrats have seen congressional campaigns collapse—not for lack of money, but for lack of message and messengers—it's a rare dose of common sense. Democratic activists know that their candidates did not lose because of a massive shift in voter sentiments, but rather because of a dramatic decline in turnout

Kaptur thinks that members of Congress and their constituents ought to be saying a lot of the same things—not just about issues of war and peace, but also about what opposition to the Bush administration and conservative Republican policies should look like. The senior Democratic woman in the House and a member who inspires intense loyalty among the labor and progressive farm groups for which she has been the leading congressional champion of fair trade policies, Kaptur argues that Democrats must reject tepid reforms and quick fixes. "You have to turn the whole structure of the Democratic Party upside down," she says, challenging the party to make a clear break from corporate special interests, to stop "skimming money off the top with \$5,000-per-person dinners" and start campaigning for "economic populism."

The point here is not to suggest, as Republican spinmeisters and Democratic hysterics have, that Nancy Pelosi is already a failure. Pelosi, a well-intentioned liberal with a solid record on labor, environmental and human rights issues, is speaking with more clarity than did Dick Gephardt about the need to "draw clear distinctions between our vision of the future and the extreme policies put forward by Republicans."

But even as she seized the leadership of a party sorely in need of direction, Pelosi was fuzzing her message with talk of seeking



With his recent embrace of single-payer health care, his moderately anti-war statements and his bashing of the consultants and pollsters who have guided Democrats into the abyss, Gore seems to be signaling that he knows something a lot of Washington Democrats do not.

"common ground" with Republicans in the White House and Congress. Pelosi chose to eschew populism in order to keep the peace in a caucus where a handful of conservative southern Democrats exercise disproportional influence and in hopes of maintaining her ability to raise the massive amounts of campaign money she guided into the coffers of Democratic congressional contenders during the 2002 campaign.

Pelosi's fall vote against launching a unilateral war with Iraq earned her "opposition leader" credibility that Gephardt and Daschle lack. But so far Pelosi is offering Democrats little in the way of the clean break with corrupt and corrosive strategies that they got from William Jennings Bryan in 1896, Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932 or the House and Senate "Watergate babies" of the 1970s.

Pelosi—who is still struggling to define a proper opposition stance for the caucus—would do well to borrow a page from Kaptur. She could start by asking herself whether there are any Democrats outside the House Minority Caucus who disagree with Kaptur's argument that, "I want our Caucus to be a deliberating body, not a cheerleading body. We should get the influence of big money out of Congress and construct a progressive economic agenda for America."

Cognizant of the failure of congressional Democrats to seize upon the Enron scandal, Kaptur says Democrats need to recognize that they will never be able to present themselves as an alternative to big-money Republican politics until they make their own break from the special interests. Rather than competing for corporate campaign money, she says, Democrats "should hold up key Republican fundraisers, such as Jack Welch and Kenneth Lay, as the poster boys for the failed GOP economic strategy. Yes, we should hold the Republicans' feet to the fire on rising bank fees, skyrocketing insurance rates, tax breaks skewed to the richest Americans and a failed deregulation strategy."

Freed from the constraints of big-money, Kaptur suggests, Democrats could do far more than criticize: They could begin to "articulate an alternative for America's families and workers."

"We should work with Democratic governors and state legislatures to push prescription-drug initiatives," she continues. "We should propose a federal national health insurance plan for small businesses. We should propose a counter-cyclical economic stimulus plan that includes visionary projects such as high-speed rail to get our country out of recession. And we should champion an energy independence plan that would liberate our foreign policy and help solve our balance of payments problem."

"We should stand up not only for the steel industry, but also the textile workers in the Southeast, the auto-parts industry in the Midwest, and small businesses such as the tool-and-die shop owner and the family farmer all around the country. They're all in trouble, and nobody's standing up for them because they're not giant multinational corporations pumping money into the political system."

Kaptur will not be in a leadership position in the House, but she will continue to be heard. She has visited Iowa and New Hampshire to test presidential waters, earning a particularly warm reception from farmers who delighted in her critique of corporate agribusiness. She probably won't seek the presidency, but one of her allies in the House, fellow Ohio Democrat Dennis Kucinich, is likely to do so. Kucinich, the chairman of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, says that if he seeks the presidency, he will mount a campaign that speaks to many of the same issues that Kaptur addressed in her brief House leadership run. The difference, of course, will be that while Kaptur was trying to convince Washington insiders to change their ways, Kucinich will be speaking directly to grassroots Democrats in primary and caucus states.

Intriguingly, Kucinich may face some competition for control of the reform message from an unlikely source: Al Gore. While Gore may be lacking in the credibility department, he appears determined to present himself as a dramatically different kind of Democrat than the Al Gore who carried the party's banner in 2000.

Gore probably won't take many hard-core progressive populist voters away from Kucinich, a former mayor of Cleveland whose record on issues of corporate power, civil liberties and foreign affairs is dramatically better than that of all but a handful of congressional Democrats. But with his recent embrace of single-payer health care, his moderately anti-war statements and his bashing of the consultants and pollsters who have guided Democrats into the abyss, Gore seems to be signaling that he knows something a lot of Washington Democrats do not: That to win the confidence of the party's core constituencies, those who would lead the party will have to offer a lot more than a tepid managerial message. ■

THE BLAME GAME

Black voters did their part for the Democrats—but their issues are on the back burner

By Salim Muwakkil

The GOP's stunning sweep on Election Day has dashed Democrats' political hopes of congressional gains and further marginalized the party's most reliable bloc of voters, the black electorate.

The black Democratic candidates who ran high-profile statewide races all lost. African-American voters also were expected to provide the margin of victories for Democrats in a number of state House and Senate races. Those expectations never materialized. According to Ron Walters of the University of Maryland, a leading analyst of black politics, Democrats failed to ignite the passion of the black electorate. "There were several reasons," he notes, "but the main ones were a lack of national leadership, failure to develop a clear alternative ideology and a Republican-lite issues platform."

In attempting to explain the sweeping GOP victory, many analysts, like Walters, initially speculated that African-Americans didn't turn out to vote. But surprisingly, the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation reports that African-American turnout was about 39.3 percent this year. In the 1998 midterm election, it was 37.5 percent. Analysts are finding that although black voters did their part for the Democrats, the GOP efforts to energize white voters were unusually successful.

David Bositis of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies says that despite historical patterns favoring opposition parties in midterm elections, Democrats were fighting some pretty high odds. Facing a popular, wartime president who effectively nationalized the election and wielded his eminence to boost the campaigns of key GOP candidates, their options were limited. "Given the heavily Republican tenor of the times," Bositis says, "the Democrats didn't fare too badly."

Political consultant Donna Brazile, former manager of Al Gore's presidential campaign, says the black vote was critical in Mark Pryor's win of a Senate seat in Arkansas and Phil Bredesen's gubernatorial victory in Tennessee—and it kept Democratic Sen. Jean Carnahan competitive in her narrow loss to Jim Talent in Missouri.

The black electorate pretty much held its own in this election; in fact, the Congressional Black Caucus actually increased its number from 38 to 39. (Georgia state Sen. David Scott won re-election for the state's recently created 13th Congressional district.) All the black members of the 108th Congress will be Democrats after J.C. Watts, the lone black Republican, steps down from his Oklahoma seat in January.

Newcomer Scott will join Florida's Kendrick Meek as Black Caucus freshmen. Meek succeeds his mother, Rep. Carrie Meek, as a representative from Miami. The two other black freshmen are Georgia's Denise Majette and Alabama's Artur Davis, who defeated incumbents Cynthia McKinney and Earl Hilliard, respectively, in the primaries. Both of these races were bathed in controversial claims that Majette and Davis were doing the bidding of Washington lobbyists seeking to oust two of



African-American turnout was higher than in the 1998 midterm elections, but the GOP was unusually successful in energizing white voters.

Congress' rare critics of Israeli policy. Both had voted against a congressional resolution last May that applauded Ariel Sharon's military incursions into Palestinian territory, provided millions in additional aid to the Israeli military, and blamed the problems of the Middle East solely on the Palestinians.

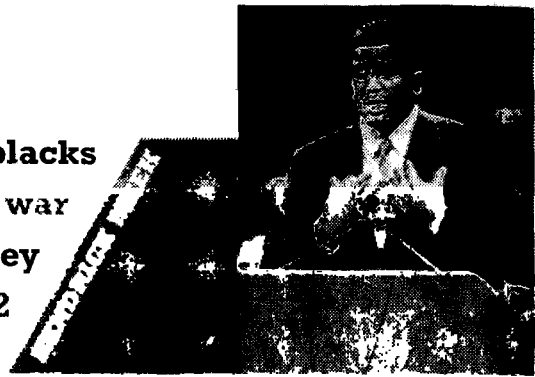
Although in Israel McKinney's views would be considered to the right of Gush Shalom, a venerable peace organization, here she and Hilliard were targeted by the influential American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which lavished campaign contributions on their opponents. Their races were object lessons in what happens to any member of Congress who strays too far from the pro-Israeli consensus on the Middle East. Davis and Majette are not likely to offer challenging critiques of U.S. foreign policy, nor are they expected to deviate much from the moderate domestic positions they outlined during their campaigns.

Tennessee's Harold Ford Jr. and New York's Gregory W. Meeks, two re-elected incumbents, also have sought to distinguish themselves from their predecessors by staking out moderate-right positions in national politics. And no matter what its stand ideologically, the Congressional Black Caucus will be further marginalized by the Democrats' minority status.

The two African-American challengers for gubernatorial offices failed. In Nevada, the Republican incumbent trounced state Sen. Joe Neal by a margin of more than 50 percent. New York state comptroller H. Carl McCall fell short in his race against popular incumbent George Pataki. "McCall ran a respectable race," Bositis says. "Remember—not only is Pataki a hero of 9/11, he is a pretty liberal Republican."

But many observers slammed McCall's campaign for its timid treatment of issues important to the black community. In a state that has been the location of some of the most horrific examples of police brutality—including the police killing of unarmed Amadou Diallo and the broomstick attack on innocent Abner Louima—and for complaints of racial profiling, McCall barely mentioned the subjects in his campaign rhetoric. "In the campaign of H. Carl McCall, the first black candidate from a major party to run for governor in New York, there is no surer way to kill a conversation than to bring up the subject of race," wrote Shaila K. Dewan in a *New York Times* story describing the campaign's last days.

**Only 6 percent of blacks
in America see the war
against Iraq as a key
concern, and only 19.2
percent support it.**



Ron Kirk, the Texas senatorial candidate and former Dallas mayor, also sought to de-emphasize race in his doomed campaign. Ironically, his candidacy was heralded as part of a multi-ethnic "dream ticket," which included a Mexican-American candidate for governor and a white candidate for lieutenant governor. Kirk's racial identity initially was marketed to boost his chances against his popular Republican opponent, but it was played down during the campaign. All three members of the "dream ticket" lost.

McCall and Kirk were simply trying to navigate their campaigns through the pock-mocked terrain of post-civil rights America. Like other black politicians seeking a statewide office, they were forced to struggle with the dilemma of how to remain relevant to their base of support without alienating other voters. Even the much-heralded new breed of black politician, like Ford or New Jersey's Corey Booker—the young, black Ivy Leaguer who challenged old-guard Newark Mayor Sharpe James and lost—have yet to figure out how to resolve this dilemma.

Although many of these "new school" black politicians tried to avoid the protest tactics and civil rights idioms of their predecessors, they found few other ways to connect with their base. Majette defeated McKinney with a heavy infusion of support from sources outside not only her district, but her party. (In fact, allies of McKinney have filed suit in U.S. District Court in Atlanta charging that "malicious" crossover voting by Republicans for Majette interfered with the voting rights of the 4th District Democrats. They filed for equitable relief under the Voting Rights Act, asking that McKinney be declared the winner. Not much chance of that, experts say.)

While Majette and Alabama's Davis do represent moderate alternatives to Hilliard and McKinney, white voters heavily supported their victories. And although recent surveys by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies have showed that African-Americans, particularly younger respondents, identify less with the Democratic Party than do older blacks, there are few indications of any major political realignment. African-Americans are much less likely to give Bush support for the war on Iraq that some pundits claim the election vouchsafed. According to a recent poll conducted by Bositis' group, only 6 percent of blacks in America see the war as a key concern, and only 19.2 percent of them support it.

But like the progressives who share much of their political profile, the views of the African-American electorate will drift to the back burner until at least 2004. So they need to get to work now. ■

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'MY ZIMBABWE'

How did Mugabe become such a monster?

By Nick Greenslade

HARARE, ZIMBABWE

In *The Past Is Another Country*, his history of Rhodesia in the 90 years before it became Zimbabwe, Martin Meredith describes the preferred *modus operandi* of premier Ian Smith in the late '60s: "White opponents were vilified as appeasers; they were branded as being part of the conspiracy to oust the white man in Rhodesia. Smith was unforgiving to his enemies, attacking them with personal abuse which obscured the real content of their argument. Foreign critics were scorned in the same way."

Spin forward to the present day, replace the word white with black, and Ian Smith with Robert Mugabe, and the picture is no less accurate.

How did we arrive at this sorry state of affairs? How is it that the man who once served as the poster boy of African nationalism for Western radicals became the mirror image of the reactionary bigot he ousted?

However much of a mess Mugabe made of the country, however many North Korean military advisers he brought in, however many opponents he eliminated, surely, it used to be said, he was still an improvement on what had come before. Not anymore.

For all his unpleasant rhetoric, Smith would never have starved hospitals of finances so that they must hold on to corpses until bereaved families settle the medical bills of their departed loved ones. I'm fairly certain Smith would not have prevented an opposition party from importing grain to ease chronic food shortages, as Mugabe is doing.

What prompted his transformation into this monster? In retrospect, one sees in Mugabe the same character flaws as many a revolutionary leader: an uncompromising determination to establish himself alone as the custodian of the revolutionary torch, a desire to subjugate the peasantry to his own predetermined dogma, an inability to tolerate dissent, especially from former colleagues.

When he warned British Prime Minister Tony Blair at the September summit on development in Johannesburg not to meddle in "my Zimbabwe," it was final confirmation of what everyone had long suspected: that Mugabe regards the state as his own personal fiefdom (his no less megalomaniac wife also speaks of "my people"). With the leaders of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) permanently bound up in legal shackles, and the last Western journalist now having left the



Robert Mugabe has replaced Black Rule with One Man Rule.

country, Mugabe has replaced Black Rule with One Man Rule.

In the '80s, Mugabe declared his fellow freedom fighter Joshua Nkomo an enemy of the state. These days, it is anyone and everyone. Garfield Todd was the (white) prime minister of Southern Rhodesia in the '50s. Together with his daughter Judith, he resisted Smith's disastrous racist policies in the '60s. As a result, both experienced harassment and imprisonment, and, in Judith Todd's case, forced exile during the '70s. When Mugabe came to power in 1980, Garfield Todd was among the first senators he appointed.

Yet both Todds became *personae non gratae*. Garfield Todd was denied his right to vote at age 95 (he died in early October), while Judith Todd had to fight the government all the way through the

courts to keep her passport. The battles they went through in the '70s, she says, turn out to have been nothing more than "just good practice for now."

Judith Todd also has come under the spotlight as a director and shareholder of the dissident *Daily News*. In 2001, when the newspaper serialized *Animal Farm*, Orwell's classic fable about encroaching tyranny, the allegorical message was lost on no one—least not on Mugabe's henchmen, who arrested the newspaper's editor and blew up its printing presses. Mugabe himself had already delivered an eerie echo of the book back in 1995 when he called for the "indigenization of the economy"—which entailed land confiscation—adding that some were "more indigenous than others." This "land reform" has indeed become the most symbolic policy of indigenization, or black control of the economy, despite the fact that many white farmers had been on the land for generations.

About 4,400 whites own and farm 32 percent of Zimbabwe's agricultural land, which the government is in the process of repossessing. Another 30 to 35 percent of the land is owned and farmed by about 1 million black peasants; the rest remains in the hands of the government and its cronies. This is a depressing legacy of colonial rule, and much of the Western press coverage has conveniently overlooked it, preferring to resort to racial stereotypes about feral African savages threatening civilized white folks. Equally, one cannot simply view the current maelstrom as the white settlers finally reaping "blowback" for generations of a minority rule.

So what is it really about? Corruption, for a start. The policy of land reform has been characterized by nepotism. The heads of the police, the army and the more sinister Central Intelligence Organization have all secured prime real estate for themselves. Naturally, Grace Mugabe, the leader's second wife, has her greedy eye on a new ranch. At a lower level, development funds are quietly pilfered by officials of the Zanu-PF, Mugabe's party.

But here's the nub of the matter. While the Western media have focused on the plight of the white farmers, those whom Mugabe calls his own people are destined to be the real victims. None of the benefits of this "indigenization of the economy" are filtering down to the lower rungs of Zimbabwean society.

Africa has witnessed famine before, but usually as a result of a deadly combination of ignorance, corruption and climate shocks. What distinguishes the Zimbabwean predicament is that here it is being deliberately engineered and employed as an instrument of political oppression. Those profitable farms that still remain in the hands of the white population are illegally occupied by Mugabe's free-roaming militia, with the black labor force told not to return. Only those who subsequently "get with the program" can hope to see any of the outside food aid that Mugabe is controlling. Those blacks who try to continue to serve whites, those who do not cooperate with the government's program of forced labor on the badly run farms of government cronies, or those who are known to associate with the MDC are left to fend for themselves.

Unemployment is now pushing 70 percent, and hyper-inflation is the norm. According to conservative government estimates, 18 percent of children have been withdrawn from school because parents can no longer afford the fees. Lawlessness has greatly hampered the country's ability to attract tourists, while hunger is leading many Zimbabweans to resort to game-poaching, further undermining the draw of the safari industry. A vicious circle continues. All this in a country whose HIV rate currently stands at 25 percent.

The reluctance of Mugabe's African neighbors to take strong action against him is depressing. Following the fixed general elections in March, the British Commonwealth put Zimbabwe on a 12-month suspension. At the end of September, the leaders of Australia, South Africa and Nigeria met to deliver their midterm report. Nothing had improved. Mugabe had continued to wilfully ignore the rule of law. If anything, he had now turned his venom on the judiciary for having the temerity to remain independent. On September 13, retired High Court Judge Fergus Blackie was arrested on trumped-up charges of having an affair with a woman whose appeal he had upheld. Everyone knew that his real crime was ordering the imprisonment of government minister Patrick Chinamasa for

contempt of court. Despite these examples of blatant malfeasance, Presidents Thabo Mbeki and Olusegun Obasanjo refused to endorse Australian Prime Minister John Howard's call for Zimbabwe's official expulsion from the alliance.

In the same week, local elections were scheduled. The Zimbabwe Election Support Network had taken the bold step of producing ads in the independent press to highlight examples of political chicanery—ballot locations transferred at the last moment, candidates suddenly asked to produced birth certificates—and some plain, old-fashioned thuggery. Opposition MP Roy Bennett spotted assorted "war veterans"—they call themselves that, though most of them were scarcely out of diapers when the real conflict raged—hanging around ballot booths, offering maize to starving peasants in exchange for votes for Zanu-PF. Roy even managed to capture the evidence on tape.

Within hours, he was hauled into the local police station. After two days and a couple of beatings ("I see nothing," said the local superintendent), Roy was released on bail, which is more than can be said for some of the farm laborers with whom he shared a cell. No charges had been brought against these homeless individuals. They had been discovered in a deserted farmhouse where they were working on its electrical fittings to make the place inhabitable. Clearly, it had been set aside for one of Mugabe's cronies. Dragged out and thrown behind bars, they had been denied food and water for four days.

John Makumbe, a political analyst and chairman of Transparency International, which highlights the numerous instances of corruption here, believes that the time has finally come for the United Nations to intervene and, if necessary, expel Zimbabwe from that body, officially putting it beyond the pale of the international community. But the reluctance of African nations to kick one another and the distraction of the United States and Britain with Iraq makes this unlikely. Makumbe calls Mbeki and Obasanjo "cowardly." He says: "They've effectively bought him another six months to further establish his dictatorship and cronyism."

According to Father Tim Neil, a full-scale famine has now descended. Neil runs a charity offering jobless farmhands a patch of land to cultivate, somewhere to draw water from. It doesn't sound like much, but it represents the difference between subsistence and starvation. Even this assistance has been frowned upon: Volunteers who have gone into the city to help the ever-growing mass of street children have been scattered by the cops. Neil himself has been detained on several occasions.

It was hardly surprising, then, that my plane from Harare to London seemed to be full of young black Zimbabweans who, after a careful glance over their shoulder, would tell you *sotto voce* that everyone just wanted to get the hell out of there. Or rather, everyone just wanted to get out of that hell. ■

THE LOOMING FAMINE IN ZIMBABWE IS BEING DELIBERATELY ENGINEERED AND EMPLOYED AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POLITICAL OPPRESSION.

Love and Hate

By James North

Does a McDonald's restaurant in London mean the same as one in Hong Kong or in Mexico City? The answer is a complex "no."

The Eagle's Shadow: Why America Fascinates and Infuriates the World

By Mark Hertsgaard
Farrar, Straus and Giroux
246 pages, \$23

In Britain, McDonald's is no longer novel; it means cheap fast food, with perhaps a lingering whiff of American informality or garishness, depending on your taste. More politically aware Britons rightly regard the chain as a bully, which in the '90s sued a small activist organization for publishing a critical leaflet. McDonald's took advantage of Britain's harsher libel laws to win nearly \$60,000 in damages, but it lost the publicity war.

For Hong Kong, we are fortunate to have the anthropologists who contributed to the informative and surprising *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia* (edited by James L. Watson, 1997). Watson discovered that at first, from approximately 1975 to 1985, "McDonald's became the 'in' place for young people wishing to associate themselves with the laid-back, non-hierarchical dynamism they perceived American society to embody." But today, McDonald's has become routine, and few patrons are "seeking an American cultural experience" any longer. In fact, Watson points out, part of the chain's appeal now is the cleanliness of its bathrooms, which has inspired a wave of hygienic improvement in restaurants across Hong Kong.

In both London and Hong Kong, McDonald's means cheap food. In Mexico City, however, like elsewhere in the Third World, Big Macs cost the same, but most people earn only a few dollars a day. So the McDonald's at the corner of Avenida Insurgentes and the Paseo de la Reforma is an upper-middle-class hangout, and working people get *their* fast food—tacos, beans and tortillas—from stalls in the marketplace over to the east.

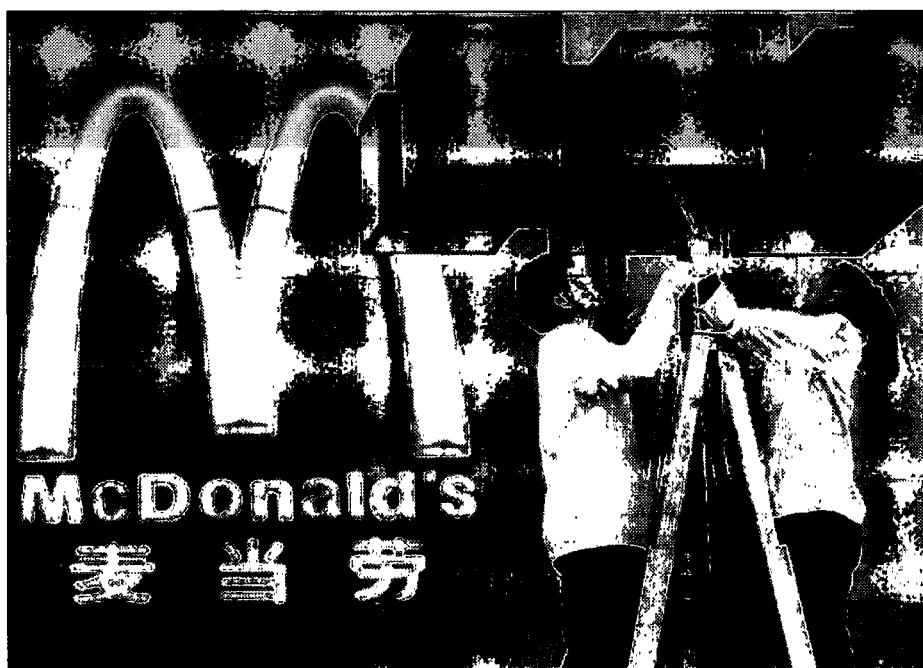
If the impact of an American chain restaurant is this varied and complex,

how can you comfortably generalize about more weighty issues, like the world reaction to American consumerism, popular culture, environmental wastefulness, Middle East policy and the attacks of 9/11?

The accomplished journalist Mark Hertsgaard sets himself two tasks in his short book *The Eagle's Shadow*, aimed at two different audiences. First, he tries to describe America's influence in the rest of the world, to explain to Americans how they are perceived overseas. Second, he

Hertsgaard is best when he deals with specifics, like the appalling decline in foreign news coverage in the mainstream U.S. media. (He is well-equipped for this task as the author of *On Bended Knee*, a brilliant 1988 study of how the Reagan administration manipulated the press.) "By 2001," he points out, "the average thirty-minute evening newscast was devoting less than two minutes a night to international news, while coverage of crime stories tripled." He notes that only 15 percent of Americans have passports, so the media, particularly television, are largely responsible for the widespread ignorance.

When Hertsgaard turns to U.S. influence overseas, he displays his major failing, one not uncommon in the antiglobalization movement: an exaggeration



The Golden Arches: Clean bathrooms for all.

addresses foreign readers, pointing out the good side of America, citing the civil rights and women's movements, and urging others not to entirely blame the American people for the sins of their government.

Each task is huge, so it is no surprise that Hertsgaard falls short. His effort to generalize, based on some first-hand reporting, is interesting in places, but (probably inevitably) inadequate and sometimes just plain wrong. His attempt to explain us to others is eloquent and more successful, but will come as no surprise to politically conscious Americans.

of American cultural imperialism. He uncharacteristically strays into a lazy American reportorial tradition, walking down the main street in a foreign place, noting McDonald's, Starbucks, teenagers wearing Nike running shoes, and Hollywood films at the local theater. He then pronounces the local people hopelessly colonized by America.

But he ignores plenty of contrary evidence. The world's No. 1 sport, for instance, is soccer, and names like Zico, Ronaldo and Zidane, recognizable from

Argentina to Zimbabwe, are nearly unknown in the United States. Radio is still the top medium in the Third World, and American influence there is almost nil; even among the international networks, the Voice of America in most places is a non-entity alongside the more independent BBC.

Music is even more clearly free from American domination, and a good counter-example of how genuine, democratic globalization can work. Take the late Nigerian star Fela Kuti; he grew up in the '40s and '50s, influenced by an already complex mix of West African traditional music and American jazz. Then he studied trumpet and classical music theory in London. In the late '60s, he came to America, where soul singer James Brown had a great impact. Back in Nigeria, he released one politically conscious and musically innovative Afro-Beat album after another, blistering the military dictators who ruled his country and winning wide popularity. You would not have wanted to suggest to Fela that he was a slave to American culture.

What's more, Hertsgaard does not give Third World people enough credit for engaging independently with Hollywood blockbusters or American soap operas. (He leaves out the tremendous popularity of Mexican and Brazilian soaps in Russia, Eastern Europe and elsewhere.) Americans can grasp universal themes in the *Thousand and One Nights* and *Grimm's Fairy Tales* other than Arab chauvinism or German cultural nationalism, so why should Third World people be any different?

Noam Chomsky is right to point out that vague references to "globalization and cultural hegemony" cannot explain the September 11 attacks or the varying and complex levels of anti-American feeling around the world. Such insubstantial talk draws attention away from quite specific American policies and actions. Hertsgaard does cite some of these, chiefly the Bush administration's refusal to sign the Kyoto global warming treaty and America's continued irresponsible SUV culture. (He is also quite right to note a specific form of cultural imperialism; he points out that people in the Middle East "resented the negative stereotypes attached to Muslims and Arabs by American movies, television and news coverage.")

But one good specific example of why people in the Middle East might not like America was Bill Clinton's nighttime cruise missile attack against the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical manufacturing plant in Khartoum, Sudan. The attack on August 20, 1998, destroyed the factory and killed its watchman and his family. Clinton justified the attack by claiming the plant was linked to Osama bin Laden and that it produced ingredients for chemical weapons.

The German ambassador to the Sudan at the time, Werner Daum, later convincingly rebutted all of Clinton's allegations (in the *Harvard International Review*, Summer 2001). British journalists investigated and learned that the plant had produced 50 percent of Sudan's medicines and all of its tuberculosis drugs, on which some 100,000 people depended. Ambassador Daum concluded: "It is difficult to assess how many people in this poor African country died as a consequence of the destruction of the Al-Shifa factory, but several tens of thousands seems a reasonable guess." Sudan's government went to the United Nations to ask for an inquiry into the attack, but the Clinton administration blocked their request.

This story barely made its way into those two nightly minutes of foreign news, so almost no Americans know what

determined enough we would have seen something, like the huge crowds shouting "Death to America" when the Shah of Iran fell in 1979.

Sudan has lived under an Islamist dictatorship since 1990, a regime that gave Osama bin Laden refuge for several years in the mid-'90s. But the government does not represent the majority of popular opinion; it seized power in a military coup because it had gotten less than a quarter of the vote in the last free elections.

Most Sudanese are practicing Muslims, not fanatics. Some, in fact, have been supporters of the once-influential Communist Party. One of the nation's most popular singers, Muhammad Wardi, has been politically active on the left for more than 40 years and presently lives in exile. People like him are certainly capable of distinguishing the American people from their government.

Among the nomadic herders out in the western Sudanese desert, in Kordofan province, I suspect there would have been genuine confusion. When I met them back in 1986, they loved America, particularly President Ronald Reagan, whom they credited with sending the emergency food aid that saved them after the drought and famine of the early- to mid-'80s. They had composed songs in honor of Reagan, and some had even named their children for him.

I did not have the heart to tell them that only an international grassroots campaign, started by, among others, an Irish rock star named Bob Geldof, had shamed the initially reluctant Reagan administration into increasing its help. Some of them earnestly asked me to convey their thanks personally to Reagan and Vice President George Bush, presumably assuming that because they knew the sheikhs in their area, I probably knew the ones in mine.

I am sure they had a tremendously hard time understanding how a country that had sent them food could then destroy their pharmaceutical plant and never even admit it was wrong or offer compensation. I cannot even guess how they might have reacted to September 11. ■

James North (jamesnorth@mail.com) has reported for *In These Times* from the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and Asia. He lives in New York City.

In the Third World, McDonald's, Starbucks and Nike aren't always the obvious signs of cultural imperialism that they seem.

happened. But the story is certainly part of the popular consciousness in the Middle East.

So how would a Sudanese have reacted to the September 11 attacks against America? I have not been in the Sudan since 1986, but I suspect that the response was complex and extraordinarily ambivalent. First of all, there was no widespread dancing in the streets there or anywhere else. In some places, possibly including the Sudan, authoritarian regimes might have prevented public celebrating, but if people had been

Don't Fence Me In

By Neve Gordon

Have you ever thought about the baby-bottle nipple and the extensive impact this small object has had on society? Michel Foucault mentioned this simple innovation in an interview, sug-

Barbed Wire: A Political History

By Olivier Razac
The New Press
132 pages, \$22.95

gesting that it not only did away with the age-old profession of wet nurses, but changed the lives of millions of mothers. In many ways, the plastic nipple helped free women from their imprisonment in the private realm, while facilitating the possibility of egalitarian parenthood.

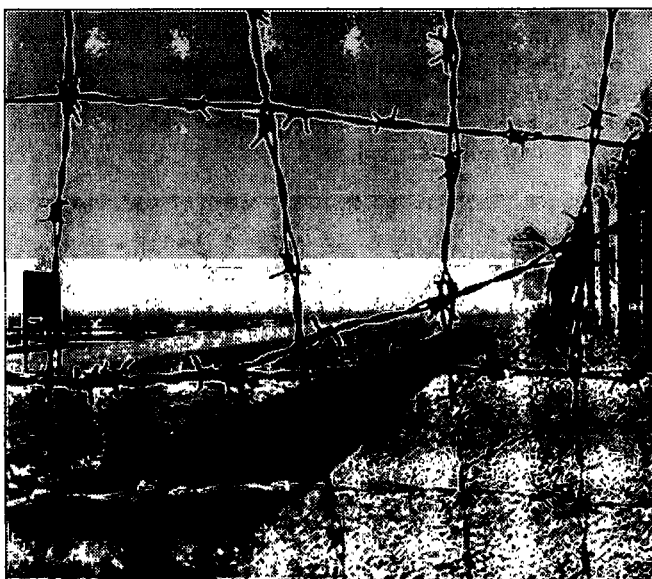
In his *Prison Notebooks*, Antonio Gramsci briefly discusses the tin can, asserting that among other things it helped shape modern warfare. The novel capacity to stock up canned food in the trench store-rooms—months in advance—prolonged World War I and intensified its horrific effects.

While materialist histories of objects like the tin can and the plastic nipple have yet to be written, Olivier Razac recently took it upon himself to chronicle the invention and use of barbed wire. The book is written in both a luring and lucid fashion and is illustrated with arresting American and European archival photographs.

In 1874, J.F. Glidden, an Illinois farmer, took out a patent for the barbed iron wire he had invented, and for a machine that would mass-produce it. He wanted to help new American farmers assert property ownership over their land. Sure enough, as white newcomers moved west, rapidly fencing off the prairie, the production of barbed wire shot up from 270 tons in 1875 to 135,000 tons in 1901.

The 1887 Dawes Act authorized the president to parcel out Indian land to white farmers. Simply by fencing in their

newly acquired plots, white farmers managed to enclose the Indians in reservations, cutting them off from hunting grounds. Barbed wire, as Razac puts it, “chopped space into little bits and broke up the communal structure of Indian society ... [making] the Indian’s geographical and social environment hostile to them, so that it became a foreign territory where the tribal way of life was unimaginable and where nomadic wandering and hunting were impossible. In short, it created the conditions for the physical and cultural disappearance of the Indian.”



Barbed wire at Dachau.

During the same period, farmers employed the wire to defeat the cattle barons, in what was labeled the “barbed wire wars.” In the Hollywood film *Man Without a Star*, the very sight of barbed wire infuriates Kirk Douglas, who plays the archetypal cowboy hero. “What’s the matter?” asks the farmer. “I don’t like it,” Douglas answers, “or what it’s used for.” With the fencing in of the prairie, the cattle empire, founded on free grazing, ultimately collapsed, and the lone cowboy riding over the plains disappeared.

The lightness of the barbed wire and the difficulty in spotting it converted the “bramble,” as it was frequently called, into a tactical apparatus employed in the defensive structure of World War I trenches.

Easily repaired or replaced, barbed wire did away with soaring thick walls, creating a network of entanglements that was a highly efficient obstacle against the attack of enemy infantry. Combatants who were caught in the wire were killed by rival fire. It is not coincidental that one of the most

“Liberty. The breach in the barbed wire gave us a concrete image of it.”

vivid images from World War I is the corpse of a soldier entangled in wire in the middle of no-man’s-land.

Barbed wire was also a central element in the architectural design of the Nazi concentration camp. A double fence of electrified barbed wire usually encircled the camp from the outside, while a whole set of fences divided the inside, helping to produce the totalitarian organization of space. “Everywhere,” Primo Levi wrote, “was the sinister tight iron grip. We never saw where the barbed-wire fences ended, but we felt their malign presence which separated us from the world.”

The wire also assisted in shrouding the extermination project in a veil of secrecy. At the Sobibor and Treblinka camps, the path leading to the gas chambers was camouflaged with barbed-wire braided with branches. The use of barbed wire not only facilitated the organization of space, but also this space’s swift erasure. None of the concentration camps were built to last; most were constructed in such a way that they could easily be dismantled and thus could disappear from sight and, as some hoped, from memory. “It was there,” Razac points out, “but it was not there. It was transient.”

Despite the Nazi attempt to expunge their existence, the concentration camps helped turn the image of barbed wire into a graphic symbol of captivity, political violence and death. Levi put it this way: “Liberty. The breach in the barbed wire gave us a concrete image of it.”

The book's second part provides a theoretical analysis of how barbed wire was employed to manage space. Razac cogently argues that its use should be understood as both a sign and an action. As a sign, barbed wire "produces a kind of shock when it is used to enclose people, shaking their certitude that they are human. It confirms their fate: like beasts, they are to be worked or slaughtered."

As an action, barbed wire excludes and includes. "Its function is always to magnify differences between the inside and the outside."

Razac employs Foucault's notion of "biopolitics," the idea that in the 18th century governing began to concern itself with life—rather than death—by using a variety of techniques to manage the lives of its subjects. The author maintains that barbed wire was successful in the United States because it coincided with the biopolitical needs of the whites, while helping to destroy Indian society. Wittingly or unwittingly, *Barbed Wire*

offers a corrective to Foucault, for it shows that modern biopolitics is often intricately tied to a thanatopolitics, the politics of extermination and death.

But Razac's theoretical discussion is, in many ways, also disappointing. My major reservation has to do with his attempt to conflate, rather than to distinguish, the different ways in which barbed wire was employed to manage space. He argues that barbed wire was used to separate "those who will live from those who will die," while producing a "distinction between those who are allowed to retain their humanity and those reduced to mere bodies."

While this analysis appears accurate when thinking of the Nazi concentration camps, it does not ring true in relation to World War I. It is precisely the diverse historical roles barbed wire has played—both as sign and as action—in the modern process of separating and homogenizing society that needs to be exposed, analyzed and explained.

Explicating and trying to understand the continued widespread use of barbed wire could have added an additional dimension to this fascinating book. For example, examining the architectural similarity and differences between the camps Israel has constructed to hold Palestinians and the concentration camps Jews were held in during the Holocaust, urges one to ponder how it is that the reappearance of barbed wire in the Israeli landscape does not engender an outcry among survivors.

Does this silence put into question the symbolic power of barbed wire, or does it underscore that this power is always limited by its own context? Questions like these could have problematized Razac's analysis, suggesting that the issues at hand are often more complex than the book implies. ■

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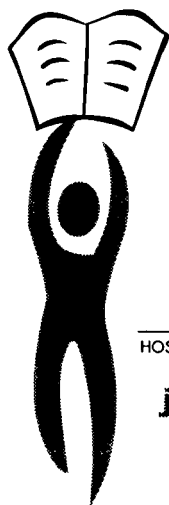


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The Play of the Waves

By Joe Knowles

The word "ineffable" is a paradox: If something is truly too great for words, why have a word for it? And is there anything really too profound for language to express? Certainly not God,

Solaris (1961)

By Stanislaw Lem

Harcourt Brace

204 pages, \$12

Solaris (1972)

Directed by Andrei Tarkovsky

Solaris (2002)

Directed by Steven Soderbergh

whose own enlisted theologians, of every faith and epoch, have never failed to demonstrate His rather pointed effability with their very eloquence. The same goes for beauty, inspirer of many a voluble romantic (and quite a few cynics as well). Even the most unspeakable horror can't leave us speechless for long—witness the aisles of Holocaust literature at your local bookstore. Never underestimate the human capacity—and urge—to search, to explain, to communicate.

But what happens when words really do fail us? Having given up on the capability to theorize, to articulate, to arrive at knowledge, can we hope to know ourselves, much less the outside world? The genius of Polish author Stanislaw Lem's 1961 science-fiction novel *Solaris* is that humanity has finally met its epistemological match.

In Lem's novel, humankind is faced with a baffling, massive intelligence in the shape of a plasmic ocean covering a planet in orbit around two suns. Earth's best and brightest pull out all the stops to try to solve the riddle of—and communicate with—the only other sign of intelligent life in the galaxy. But the ocean reacts inconsistently—and sometimes indifferently—to various experiments and stimuli, and remains impervious to any single conceptual framework that might explain or even describe its processes. Lem goes into considerable and engrossing detail on the vast but dismal science of "Solaristics," which abjectly fails to penetrate the behavior of the ocean's spectacularly churning waves.

In time, humanity more or less gives up, abandoning attempts to understand the universe and regressing into complacency and a sort of cosmic autism. By the time Lem's narrator, psychologist Kris Kelvin, arrives on the scene, a century has passed without any progress whatsoever: "Our scholarship ... amounted to a useless jumble of words, a sludge of statements and suppositions." The research station hovering above the ocean, once home to

The scientists' failure to communicate—with the ocean, with each other, with their visitors and with themselves—is the abiding theme of Lem's novel, and of the late Andrei Tarkovsky's mind-bending film adaptation from 1972.

But Tarkovsky, looking even more inward than Lem did, added extensive material set on earth to his *Solaris*, introducing us to Kelvin's father, mother and aunt. We observe Kelvin's intimate con-



Mirror, mirror: Natalya Bondarchuk in Tarkovsky's take on *Solaris*.

hundreds of diligent scientists, has been gradually defunded to the point where just three cynical crewmembers remain.

But when bizarre communiques from the last of the Solarists start arriving on earth, Kelvin, an old friend of the station commander, is dispatched to investigate. The ocean, it turns out, has been probing the minds of the crewmembers and populating the station with "visitors": breathing, conscious replicas of people plucked from their deepest memories. Kelvin arrives at the chaotic and neglected station, where the terrified scientists barricade themselves behind bulkheads, hiding with their incarnate demons and refusing to talk to him or each other. And it's not long before Kelvin receives a visitor of his own: his wife Rheya, who committed suicide on earth 10 years before.

nection with the landscape of his home, his ambivalence about the impending mission, and hints of the skeletons in his closet he is trying to forget. The mirrors to the soul awaiting on Solaris are prefigured from the very first shot—a reflective stream of water hypnotically flowing by in close-up.

The celebrated "driving scene" through a futuristic metropolis (actually '70s Tokyo) poignantly contemplates mankind adrift not only in the cosmos, but in a lonely crowd. Home-movie footage of the family at a campfire in the snow, accompanied by a forlorn and recurring Bach chorale prelude, conveys the essence of nostalgia that the ocean ultimately fulfills. There isn't much dialogue, but when the characters do open their mouths, they speak of ethics, love and the philosophy of science, or read aloud from Cervantes.

Lem hated it. Denouncing the film as "awful," he complained that Tarkovsky "didn't make *Solaris* at all, he made *Crime and Punishment*." Recalling arguments with the director during the script's preparation, Lem said that "we were like two horses pulling the carriage in opposite directions. ... One cannot convince him of anything, as he is going to recast everything in his 'own way' no matter what."

Indeed, Tarkovsky (like the otherwise dissimilar Stanley Kubrick) didn't have much patience for the authors of his source

What happens when humanity throws in the towel? Lem and Tarkovsky had an idea.

material, and he freely adapted *Solaris* to suit his own artistic obsessions. The story of a resurrection, and the humbling limits of human knowledge it entailed, was seized upon by the Russian mystic; in many ways, his *Solaris* is not all that different from *Andrei Rublev*, his epic account of the medieval Russian icon painter. Both Kelvin and Rublev are seekers who want to understand an often cruelly indifferent environment; both undergo extreme psychological trauma; both receive visitations from the dead; both are obliged to re-evaluate their life's work; both are consumed with an existential crisis that carries distinctly religious overtones.

Yet Tarkovsky too eventually renounced his work on *Solaris*, though for reasons altogether different from Lem's. The author wanted the ontological frontier to be explored with more story, more science and less mysticism. Tarkovsky wanted the opposite. You can sense the director's impatience with certain unwieldy expository necessities, and at times, bits of technical jargon sound faintly arbitrary, signs that he was never quite comfortable with the material even in radically adapted form.

After the film's release, Tarkovsky proclaimed a distaste for science fiction and the fussy details of plot—from which he would free himself entirely for his next project, *Mirror* (1975), a hallucinatory reverie inspired by his father's poetry and his family's experiences in World War II. (Misgivings about sci-fi aside, he

returned to the genre in 1979 with the riveting *Stalker*, which effectively reconciled the two previous films' approaches to plot and image.)

While Tarkovsky's *Solaris* went unloved by its creator, it has nonetheless gained an international cult following over the years, and for good reason: Its poetic language strikes at the heart of emotions most films don't even recognize, much less attempt to locate. When a candelabrum hovers out of Kelvin's grasp in a sudden moment of zero gravity, you can feel the denial of his earthbound frustrations floating away, too; such thoroughly arresting imagery remains with the viewer for not just days or weeks, but years.

This is one reason why Tarkovsky's fans are known to develop intensely personal attachments to his work—so much so, that when word got out that Steven Soderbergh was working on a remake of *Solaris*, the director of *Ocean's Eleven* and *Erin Brockovich* reportedly found himself being pursued through the streets of Manhattan by a Tarkovskyite who shouted, "You should be ashamed of yourself!"

There are many things wrong with Soderbergh's *Solaris*, but I suppose he shouldn't be ashamed of himself. He deserves some credit for attempting to slip such a metaphysical dose of melancholy by Hollywood's Prozac-addled gatekeepers—if only more filmmakers with his resources shared his audacity. He's obviously aiming high with this picture, fancying himself astride the shoulders of giants Lem and Tarkovsky. So it's really unfortunate that the best he can muster is a moist L.A. therapy session transported to outer space, cheaply marinated in the purplish, lava-lamp glow of the titular planet.

The level of discourse never transcends checkout-line pop psychology—which wasn't necessarily a bad thing in Soderbergh's wily and underrated satire *Full Frontal*, where all the babble hilariously underlined his characters' clueless vanity—but here the vapid theorizing is not only deadly but wholly wrong. In a story whose central theme is the inability to make sense of the ocean or ourselves, Soderbergh's characters "relate" to each other and their feelings with all too much ease. Tellingly, he ignores the larger human implications of the Solarian riddle and fixates on the love story between Kelvin and Rheya.

This might be a wise road to take, since metaphysics clearly isn't Soderbergh's strong suit. Alas, the microcosm and the macrocosm need each other in this story, and without even a sketchy background of what's at stake ontologically, the whole affair just seems kind of goofy, like a cheesy New Age ghost story. It isn't helped by comically uneven acting from George Clooney, huffing and sweating his way through the Kelvin role, or the downright awful Natascha McElhone as the resurrected Rheya, who is so self-absorbed, so whiny and so irritating that it's hard to believe anyone would have been terribly distraught over her flighty suicide. When you add to the mix an aggressively weird Jeremy Davies and a tone-deaf, shouting Viola Davis as the other scientists on board, you just want to jump out of the nearest airlock.

Meanwhile, Soderbergh is too busy making clever homages to Tarkovsky and to Kubrick's 2001: *A Space Odyssey* to notice the trainwreck unspooling in oh-so-slow motion. What he forgets is that Kubrick and Tarkovsky resisted the facile quoting of other movies—they had enough confidence in their own imaginations to invent their own iconic imagery. (Indeed, there were ample opportunities here for some unprecedented visuals, but Lem's wildly psychedelic scenes that take place on the planet's surface have now gone unfilmed in both adaptations.)

Yet one kernel of relevance is buried in this revision of *Solaris*: This time, it is noted in passing, the *Solaris* research project is run not by the government, but a corporation. One gets the sense that this detail of the story was updated not because Soderbergh or his producers have anything to say about the pursuit of knowledge, or humanity's place in the universe, but because it is simply no longer considered "realistic" to imagine a future where corporations don't rule the galaxy, where scientific curiosity might be motivated by something other than profits.

If this subtext is to be matter-of-factly endorsed, then Soderbergh's iteration may well be ironic evidence that the Solarian prophecy has already come true—that our sense of possibility is waving a long and self-satisfied goodbye. I suppose, then, that this is the empty *Solaris* we deserve. ■

Joe Knowles can be reached at knowles@inthesetimes.com.

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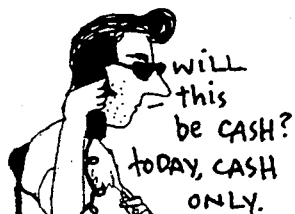
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By Nicole Hollander

majority are against tougher environmental and workplace regulations; and by a 2-to-1 margin, they believe free-trade policy creates more jobs in the United States than it costs. The voters have, by the same margins, the exact opposite views.

This polling data on the disconnect between big givers and voters tell an important story about American politics. The financial imperative severely weakens the policy performance of both parties. The investors dominate the rank-and-file party voters.

The gap is even greater, I believe, between the donors' political viewpoint and that of the American populace at large, not just the voters. Nonvoters are disproportionately low-income, blue-collar, people of color and young. They come from a different world than the donors and put a much higher priority on bread-and-butter economic issues. Their viewpoint matters even less than the ordinary voters' because they are not threats to officeholders.

Clearly, there is a forgotten American majority that our politics today fails to serve fully and fairly. This America faces major challenges: low wages, insufficient health care, non-existent pension coverage (the majority of private-sector workers have no pension coverage), daunting childcare expenses, rising college expenses

vanized around 10-point programs. They are not! People respond according to their sense of right and wrong. They respond to a leadership of values.

Not only do Democrats have too timid and too downsized an agenda, we also have failed to confront conservatives on core value questions. I call the Republicans' philosophy the "New Isolationism." Not as in foreign affairs, but in human affairs. It is a "Buddy, you're on your own" philosophy. We need to replace isolationism with fellowship. We need to talk about community, about justice, about the goodness of America. People are ready for a politics that inspires them to be their best.

But it is not enough to inspire people with vision and good public policy. We need the power to make change. Effective grassroots organizing is the way to get there. Grassroots organizing involves listening to and lobbying and advocating for people by going directly to where they live and work. It is the antithesis of big-money politics. Organizing at the grassroots requires hard and mostly unglamorous work, easily identifiable goals and political sophistication. But it can be enormously effective and successful.

People respond according to their sense of right and wrong.
They respond to a leadership of values. Not only do Democrats have too timid and too downsized an agenda, we also have failed to confront conservatives on core value questions.

and exorbitant housing costs. Only when these Americans are given a proportional voice in politics can we claim to live in a truly representative democracy.

There are three critical ingredients to democratic renewal and progressive change in America: good public policy, grassroots organizing and electoral politics. Policy provides direction and an agenda for action; grassroots organizing builds a constituency to fight for change; and electoral politics is the main way we contest for power and hold decision-makers accountable.

Public policy is not about techniques of communication. Over and over again, I hear my Democratic colleagues talk about how to better deliver our "message." But the question is not how to communicate our agenda, but whether we have an agenda worth communicating.

At least Republicans are consistent. They argue that when it comes to these pressing issues of people's lives, there is very little the government can or should do. But most people don't accept this. Most people know that this is a great philosophy only if you are wealthy.

There is a huge leadership void in this country that the Democratic Party, emboldened by political courage and a commitment to the issues that made our party great, can fill. Too many progressives make the mistake of believing people are gal-

When Democrats controlled Congress for so many years, the labor movement relied on interest-group politics. If there was a problem, you called the committee or subcommittee, where you had a long-standing relationship. The grassroots base withered away while the Christian right learned how to mobilize support. They became good at our forgotten game: voter registration, door-knocking, phoning, electing people to school boards, writing letters to the editor, calling in to talk radio, turning out voters. Now labor and other progressive organizations must learn from their example.

Victories should be won by people where they live, but if the victories never affect national or international centers of decision-making power, then we are still not seriously contesting for power. This is the central challenge for progressive politics: how to build the local victories into a strong national and international presence that can crucially define the quality of life. Right now the whole does not equal the sum of the parts. Amazing people have done so much to make their communities better, but progressives hold little power on the national level.

Electoral politics is one crucial way we contest for power in America, and progressives need to get better at it. We tend to be attracted to politics because of the issues and far less excited by the nuts-and-bolts mechanics of political campaigns, much less the compromises that are inevitable in those campaigns.

I've met hundreds of great young organizers but very few young people who are campaign managers on any level. Electoral politics seems unsavory—and indeed it can be, depending on who is involved. The problem is that progressives fail to build leadership and gain power when we eschew electoral politics. You can be certain that the Christian right develops local leadership and runs candidates for school boards. Progressives too often don't. In every state, we need to get serious about developing leaders—starting with school board, city council, county commissioner, mayoral and state legislative races. Money is much less a factor in these races than it is nationally, and well-organized citizen campaigns can win over and over again.

If we build our progressive political leadership, state by state, then we will also be in a much stronger position to thrust forward candidates for governor and for seats in the House of Representatives and the Senate. Right now, it is the same old approach in the Democratic Party. I thought it was bad in 1990 when I first ran for Senate, but it has gotten even worse. The DSCC is focused almost totally on whether a candidate is wealthy, already has power and status, or has access to big bucks. These criteria are not likely to produce many progressives focused on populist and economic-justice issues. A few might slip through, but they will be exceptions.

We need to build not a third party, but an independent political force that does a lot of organizing within the Democratic Party—

especially candidate recruitment and elections. This new political force must introduce fresh perspectives into the political dialogue of our country; recruit candidates; provide the training, skills and resources for winning campaigns; build an infrastructure of field directors and campaign managers; have a savvy media presence; apply effective grassroots organizing to electoral politics; and build political leadership at the local, state and federal levels of government.

There is a wave of social activism on our campuses today, more than I've seen in the past 15 years. But most of these students are not joining the Young Democrats. I went to a very poignant neighborhood meeting in Minneapolis, with more than 100 people crammed into a home. Almost all the people there were under 30. Most were professionals. Their exclusive focus was on issues: education, health care, housing, the environment and community service. They had little interest in politics as usually defined—candidates, political parties and elections. They were incredibly bright and thoughtful, but as it stands they will not be future political leaders. This is why politics as usual shouldn't work any longer. An independent progressive politics, combining intellectual integrity, grassroots organizing and electoral politics, is a force whose time has come. ■

A longer version of this essay originally appeared in The Conscience of a Liberal: Reclaiming the Compassionate Agenda, now available in paperback from University of Minnesota Press.

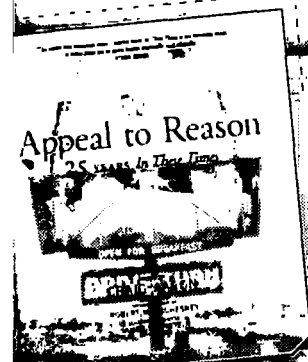
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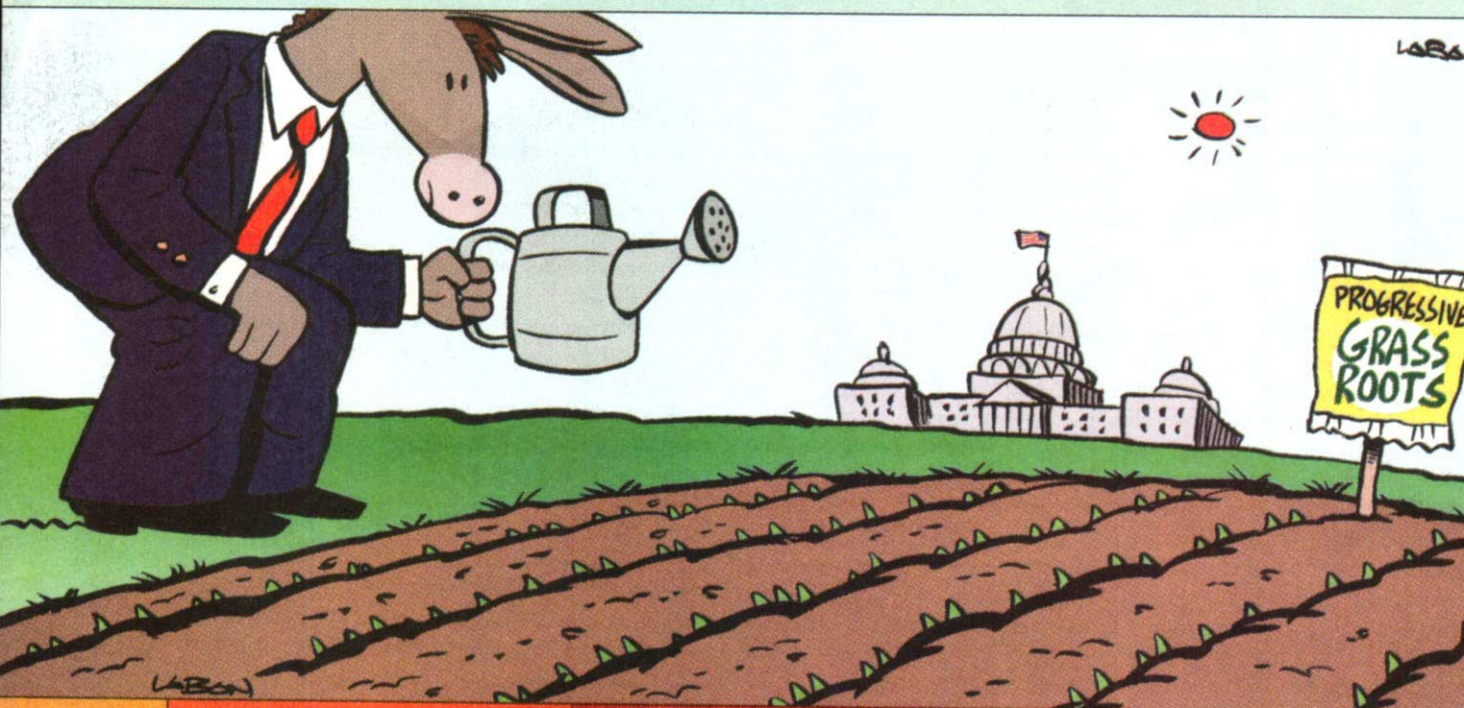
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A Winning Progressive Politics

By Paul Wellstone

Many tributes and eulogies have been written for Sen. Paul Wellstone since his tragic death in October. He was widely praised, on both sides of the aisle, for his character, conscience and conviction. Yet in the hand-wringing and finger-pointing after the Democrats' discouraging defeat on Election Day, his party's leaders seem eager to disclaim almost everything Wellstone stood for, lurching further to the right.

In his book *The Conscience of a Liberal*, from which the following excerpt is taken, Wellstone passionately argued that the party's strategy of moving rightward is tactically and morally bankrupt. Those who wish to honor his memory—whether from inside or outside the Democratic Party—would do well to heed his advice.

—Craig Aaron

I have never understood arguments for the need for politicians to “move to the center” to get elected. What is the operational definition of “the center”? If what is meant is that you need to have more votes than your opponent, then I am all for being in the center. But this is too obvious.

If what is meant by the center is the dominant mood of the populace—the issues that are important issues to Americans and what they hope for—then I would again argue for the need to occupy the center. A politics that is not sensitive to the concerns and circumstances of people's lives, a politics that does not speak to and include people, is an intellectually arrogant politics that deserves to fail.

When I am in coffee shops with people (these are great focus groups), no one asks, “Are you left, right, or center?” No one cares. What people want is that your politics be about them. Tip O'Neill once declared, “All politics is local.” But I would go further; all politics is personal.

Many Americans express an anger toward politics. That does not mean that people do not care what happens. They care deeply, sometimes desperately. But they also feel that their own struggles, the cares of their daily lives, are of little concern in the chambers of power, that whomever they choose will make little difference to them, their loved ones and their communities.

This is not a conservative America. These are people who more than anything else yearn for a politics they can believe in. They want politicians whom they can trust and who are at least most of the time on their side.

If I had to use labels, I would say that public opinion is populist and “center-left” on the issues. Yet politics, especially national politics, is “center-right.” Why the contradiction? The respected pollster Celinda Lake has data that are very instructive. Voters and donors (the top Democratic and Republican contributors) have widely divergent views on crucial reform and economic issues when given a specific example. The donors' top policy choice is tax cuts; the